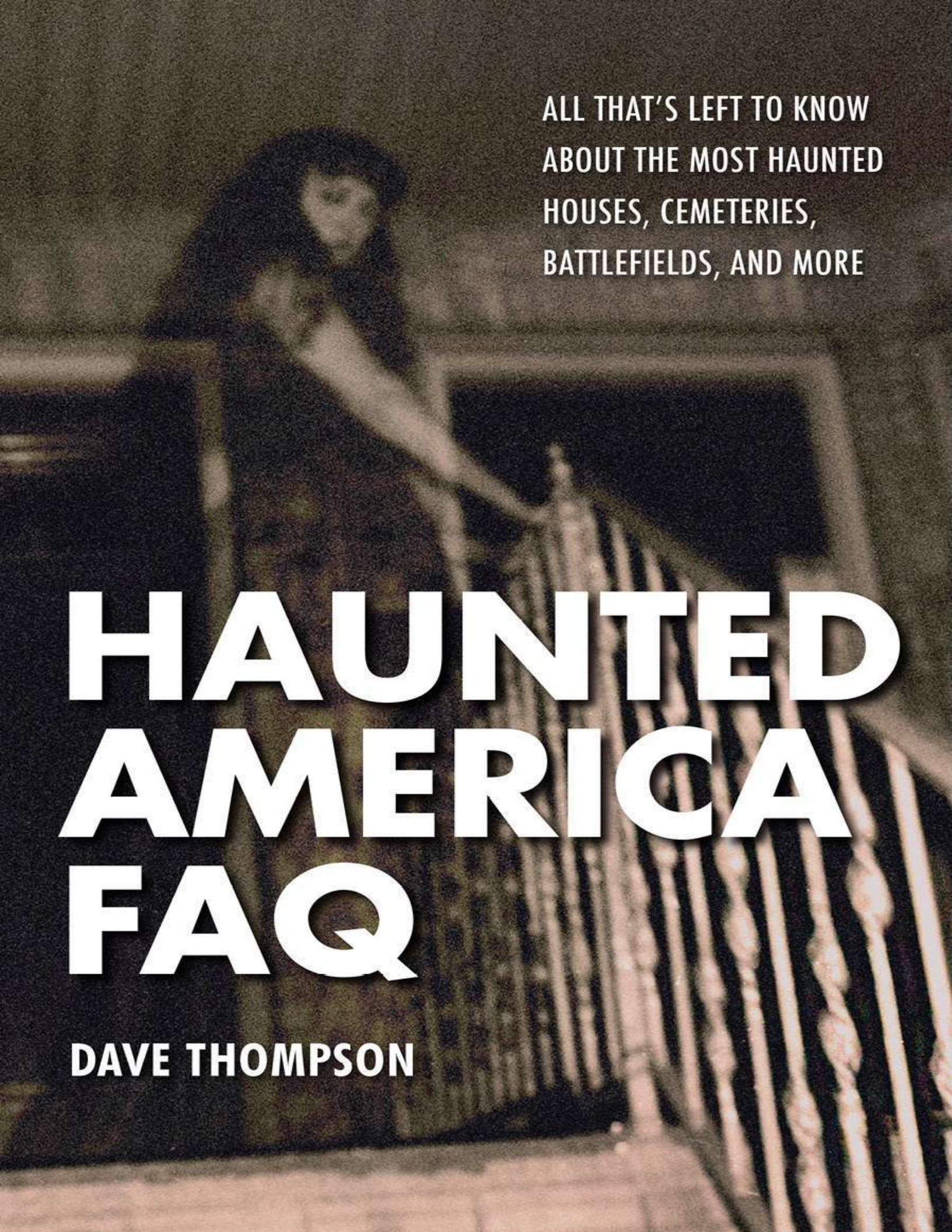
ALL THAT'S LEFT TO KNOW
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FAQ
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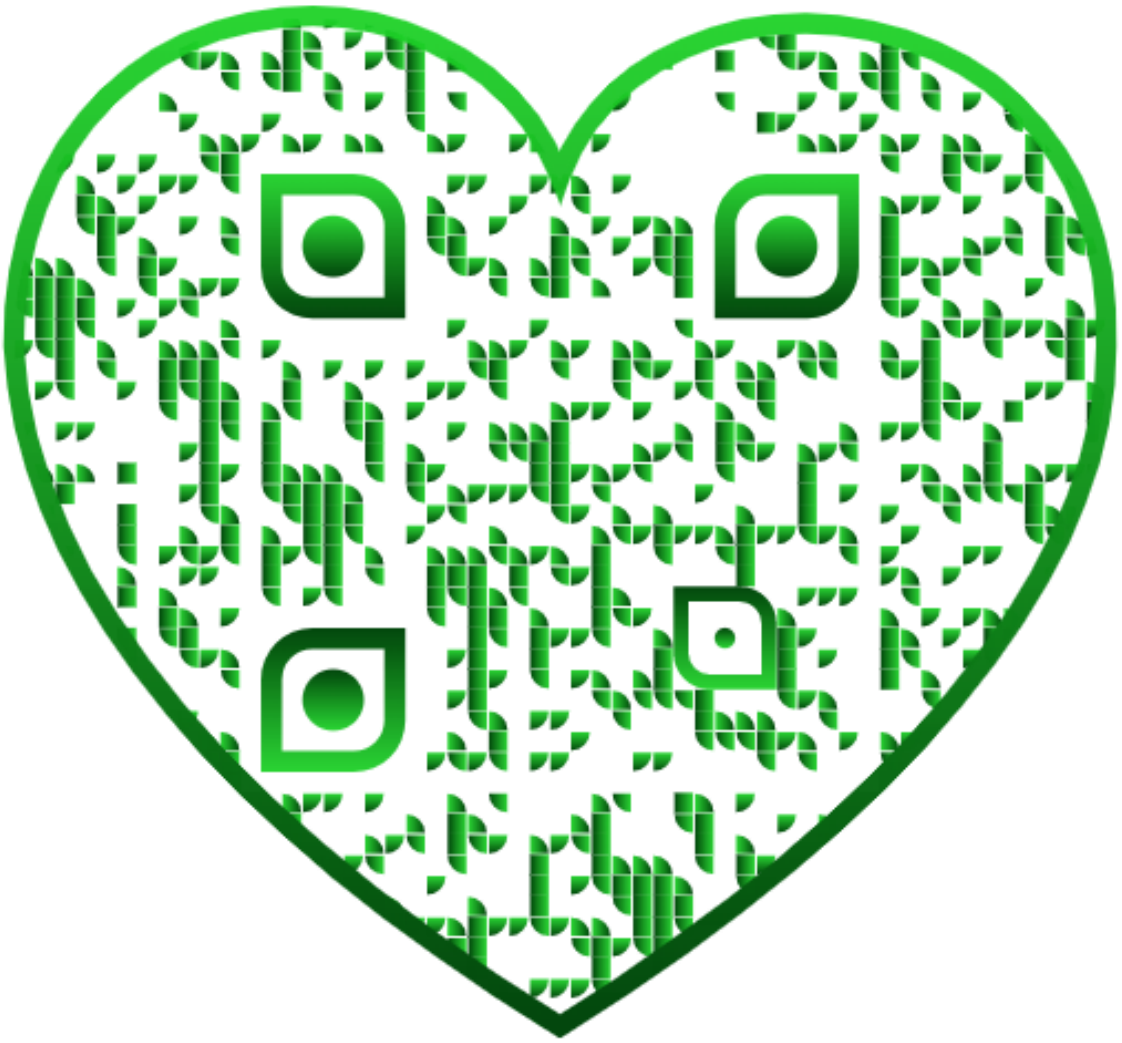

Haunted America FAQ

All That's Left to Know About the Most Haunted Houses, Cemeteries, Battlefields, and More

Dave Thompson

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Introduction

“Do I believe in ghosts? No, but I am afraid of them.”

—Marie Anne de Vichy-Chamrond, Marquise du Deffand (1697–1780)

According to the traditions of the Caddo people, a nation that spanned much of modern Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma and parts of Texas from around 900 CE, there never used to be such a thing as death. Once born, everyone and everything just kept on living. Which means things got mighty crowded, mighty quickly.

Soon, so many people swarmed the earth that there simply was no room for any more, but of course they kept on being born. Finally, the chiefs held a council, to try to decide what they should do.

One man suggested introducing death, and the assembly discussed that for a while. But their deliberations always came back around to one insurmountable obstacle. Death was so *permanent*, and nobody could bear the thought of a life being extinguished forever.

Nobody, that is, except for the Coyote. He believed that death *should* be final. Otherwise, he asked the council, what could they possibly be trying to achieve? The food would still run out in the end. Living space would still become cramped and unbearable. The world simply wasn’t big enough for everybody to live, not even if they did it in shifts.

His arguments fell on deaf ears. Death could *not* be final. Nobody, the other chiefs all agreed, would be able to bear the sorrow of knowing that they would never see their friends, relatives, loved ones again. The world might become less populated, but it would also be full of broken hearts and misery.

No, it was decreed. People would die, and they would remain dead for a while. But then they would come back, to be replaced in death by other people.

As soon as this final decision had been arrived at, the medicine men set to work. First, they built an enormous house of grass, with its entranceway

facing toward the east. Then, they took a large black-and-white eagle feather and affixed it to the top of the house.

Every time somebody died, the feather would turn bloody, and then fall over. That would be the sign for all the medicine men to gather, and together they would call the deceased to the grass house, his spirit borne aboard a whirlwind that blew in from the west, circled the house, and entered it from the east.

The spirit would be restored to the form that he or she bore during life, and then its owner would be returned to the land of the living. The entire process, from death to rebirth, would take around ten days.

Coyote, however, remained uneasy; remained confident that people were simply postponing the inevitable. One day, and one day soon, the world would become so full that all the whirlwinds in the universe would not be able to carry the crushed and the starved and the suffocated. That the undead would pile up, while the living grew more cramped, until everything fell into chaos.

There was just one thing to do. The first time the feather fell, Coyote simply observed. But the second time, he acted. He watched quietly as the medicine men gathered at the grass house; remained silent as they began to sing and chant, and call the spirit to them. Then Coyote selected for himself the seat that was placed closest to the entrance to the grass house; and, as soon as he heard the whirlwind approaching, he reached out one hand, pushed the door shut and then locked it.

Outside, the whirlwind raged, and the spirit howled, but neither could open the door. Finally the storm passed, and the spirit whirled on by, never to be reborn. Death had arrived on Earth and so, in the form of all of its victims, forever locked out of the grass house, had ghosts. Because the door to life, once closed, can never be reopened.

So, do you believe in ghosts? Spirits? Visitors from the afterlife? Trespassers from beyond the veil?

Wait.

No.

Don’t answer that. There are only three possible responses to that question anyway, and not one of them is really appropriate here. If you say “yes,” then —as Charles Dickens mused of Jacob Marley’s spectral comeback in *A Christmas Carol*, “nothing wonderful can come of the story I am going to

relate," because you already know what to expect.

Boo!

If you say "no," then you're probably not even reading this. And if you say "I don't know," then nothing you will read, here or anyplace else, is likely to sway you one way or the other. You need to meet a ghost, see a ghost, be haunted by a ghost . . . and even then, you may still not be convinced. For Dickens considered that as well, when he set old Ebenezer Scrooge to contemplate the wraith that sat before him:

"You may be an undigested bit of beef, a blot of mustard, a crumb of cheese, a fragment of an underdone potato. There's more of gravy than of grave about you, whatever you are."

Poor Marley's ghost! Seven years he waited to return to Earth, to speak again with his old friend and partner, and what does he get? Mistaken for a crumb of cheese, that's what.

What a wonderful sentence Dickens concocted, though, and what a wonderful concept he hatched. How much of what we see, hear, interpret and understand in the course of our own daily lives is simply the by-product of something we ate, something we drank, something we smoked? More than we are willing to admit, that's for certain, and that's when we're wide awake and stone-cold sober. Who *knows* what phantoms of the mind, what blots of mustard or crumbs of cheese, which artificial sweeteners or cholesterol remedies, are playing havoc with our senses while we sleep?

There's more aspartame than apparition about you, my friend. More Prozac than poltergeist.

So, is that really what we think? That ghosts (and, in their wake, spirits, specters, wraiths, haunts and all their other fiends, friends and relatives) are simply figments of the imagination?

It shouldn't really be that difficult a question to answer, although the fact that there's no scientific proof that ghosts *do* actually exist is always going to sway a lot of people's opinion. Which is odd because—if we are going to be truly pedantic about it—there's no scientific proof for the existence of a lot of the things that people believe in, including the big bang, evolution, relativity and great swaths of mathematics. Oh, and God. In one way or another, they're all theories, notions and best-guess scenarios, and that's all they can be, because there's no scientific proof for their nonexistence, either.

We believe in them because a friend of a friend . . . who happens to be an

astrologer, a biologist, a scientist or a priest . . . tells us to believe, and that trust is a good thing.

Imagine how dull camping trips would become if we knew for an incontrovertible fact that *nobody* has *ever* been trapped in their car while a recently escaped homicidal madman beats a slow rhythm on the roof with the decapitated head of the buddy who went to get gas twenty minutes back.

Or how awkward family gatherings would become, as you tried to explain to Great-Aunt Chimpanzee why you've ignored her birthday for the past forty years.

And how much harder it would be to fall asleep at nights, if you knew what all the creaks, groans and rumbles of "the old house settling down" really were.

Excuse me, but is that a gateway to Hell in your basement? Or do you just really need to get the boiler serviced?

The ghosts who fill these pages . . . who flit, float and drift through them, too . . . already know the answer to the question. And that really should be all the evidence that you require. It doesn't matter whether ghosts exist according to the rules by which *you* live *your* life. Ghosts exist according to the rules by which other people live their lives; and, apparently, according to the rules by which the dead *don't* live theirs.

There are firm legal grounds for believing in ghosts. The law of the land *does* recognize the possibility that a house can be haunted. In 1991, Reuters straightfacedly reported on the ruling handed down by a New York state court, the Appellate Division of the state Supreme Court, stating that a house seller *must* inform all potential purchasers if the house is haunted, or face the prospect of having to return the deposit. "The ruling also declared that, for legal purposes, the house in dispute was haunted."

The ghost story itself is lovely, a classic Victorian home in Nyack, New York, gently haunted by what the Reuters report termed "kindly ghosts from the Revolutionary War." Wall Street bond trader Jeffrey Stambovsky had already placed a $33,000 deposit on the $650,000 house when he "decided he didn't want to own a haunted house, and asked for his money back. The owner, Helen Ackley, refused, saying in effect: 'Let the buyer beware.' But the court said there was no way Stambovsky could have known about the ghosts unless Ackley told him," and ordered he be refunded his deposit.

Neither are the courts alone in acknowledging the spirit world. Three years

later, in 1994, Professor Ian Stevenson, a clinical psychiatrist at the University of Virginia, aroused considerable media interest when he declared that ghost sightings should no longer be dismissed as either hoaxes or hallucinations. “Evidence for these kinds of experiences are too frequent to be dismissed,” he announced at the conclusion of a lengthy study into sightings.

In other words, not everybody could be mistaken.

More people have seen ghosts than have seen a dinosaur.

More people have seen ghosts than have walked on the moon.

More people have seen ghosts than have Internet access.

Yet imagine how silly you’d think somebody was if they told you they didn’t believe in one of those things. And again, it really doesn’t matter what we, the living, think. Do ghosts themselves believe in ghosts?

It would appear, by sheer weight of numbers, that they do. In which case, to paraphrase the French philosopher René Descartes, *I haunt, therefore I am*, and it is a cause of considerable regret that no record exists of Descartes himself having returned to earth as a restless spirit. What could, after all, have been a more fitting fate for the man whose philosophies not only fostered the dawning of the Enlightenment, with its sniffy dismissal of the occult in everyday life, but who also birthed the expression “the ghost in the machine”?

When a ghost hunting expedition stumbles across more than it expected. . . well, you know it won't end well. They wouldn't have made a movie, *Documenting the Grey Man* (2011) about it, if it had.

Reserve Productions/Photofest

There are ghosts in the machine aplenty here, and occasionally ghosts that *are* machines. It is a fallacy, after all, to believe that only a living, thinking creature can come back and haunt the living. As ridiculous as it is to believe that only humans have souls. You will discover spectral dogs and ghostly cats in these pages, hauntings by horse and even hamster. Trains, boats and planes, too, all have their tales that must be told, and long disassembled buildings are as likely to reappear where they once stood, as their inhabitants are to return wearing the clothes that they *weren't* buried in.

Ghosts are disembodied spirits. Probably. But which unproven science is it that insists that people and possibly animals alone are possessed of such things? We have (or we should have) all experienced the sensation that *this* building is a happy one, but *this* one is sad. That this house is peaceful, but that one is disturbed. Where did that happiness or sadness, peace or disturbance come from? And, should the building be destroyed or demolished, where does it go?

The obvious answer is, it doesn't *go* anywhere. It stays where it always

was. It may fade over time, but just as living beings have a spirit, so inanimate objects have a presence. And that presence, some people will tell you, can stick around for years.

In January 1900, writing on Native American beliefs in the publication *American Anthropologist*, author J. W. Powell declared, “war-clubs have ghosts. The power of the club is the ghost of the club. Spears have ghosts and the ghosts of spears have eyes. The warrior who throws the spear must control its ghost. The ghost of the spear must have unerring aim, or the aim of the thrower is in vain. Arrows have ghosts, and arrows will not hit their mark unless their ghosts are controlled. Bows also have ghosts and bows will fail unless their ghosts are nerved to the task.”

Which, if you think about it, makes sense. Or maybe it makes more sense if you *don’t* think about it. A funny thing. The more conscious of its science and reason that mankind becomes, the less it understands of the things that it really should be conscious of.

Early human society would have looked with incredulity upon the question with which we opened this introduction. “Do you believe in ghosts?” You might as well ask a modern man, “Do you believe in sausages?” “Do you believe in furniture?”

The spirit world and the human world were once so closely interwoven as to be indivisible. Look at the monuments that our ancient predecessors erected, and the traditions they devised, to house, honor and succor their dead. Stonehenge, the pyramids, the catacombs of Rome, the necropolis of Hierapolis. Modern cemeteries themselves are an echo of these ancient beliefs, and the cost of a modern funeral likewise.

If we truly believed that the dead are dead (and overlooking, for the sake of argument, any health and hygiene aspects of the affair), we’d throw them out with potato peelings. Instead, deep down inside, we still retain enough of our ancestors’ belief that our dead are aware of how we treat them, that we try to ensure they don’t have anything to complain about.

And we listen with widening eyes and quickening heartbeat to the stories told about internments that were *not* carried out to the satisfaction of their headline act.

Sometime around the mid-1920s, a wealthy New York socialite left instructions that she should be buried in one particular, very beautiful and very, very expensive dress. Her sister-in-law, however, had her own designs

on the outfit and, sometime before the corpse was dressed, she substituted the desired dress for a similar one, one that was *almost* as beautiful and *almost* as expensive. But not quite.

She held out against the rage and fury of the deceased for eight days . . . or, more precisely, seven nights . . . before she confessed her deception to the widower, and arrangements were made for the corpse to be exhumed and redressed according to its original wishes.

Throughout the intervening week, however, the wretched woman barely slept, for all the noise that her late sister-in-law was making . . . noise, incidentally, that nobody else in the house could hear. She barely ate, for all the food that was placed before her seemed to heave and writhe with maggots. Maggots that nobody else could see. And she knew no peace, either, for several choice pieces of jewelry were missing from her dresser, a different one disappearing every day, until she was certain that the house was wide open to intruders.

And so it was, because when the grave was dug up and the coffin reopened, what sparkled in the corpse's ears, on her fingers, and at her throat? The missing jewelry. All of which was returned the following night, after the dress had been restored to its rightful owner.

Humbug! Even with the best will in the world, and a sense of credulity the size of Connecticut, that story is filled with so many holes that it simply cannot be true. There are no names. There is nothing but the vaguest date and, likewise, a vague location. No heed is given to how long it would have taken to get the necessary permissions to exhume a corpse; nor to the fact that few authorities would permit such an act simply to change the dead woman's clothes. Any experienced ghost hunter will tell you, the whole story is itself a phantom.

But it falls within a noble line of descent. The Roman satirist Lucian of Samosata (125–circa 180 CE) tells, in his *Philopseudus*, of a similar state of affairs, set in motion following the death of a much beloved wife. Her husband gave her the most splendid funeral and, in keeping with tradition, had consigned everything she owned to the same great pyre that consumed her body.

Twenty days later, however, as he sat quietly reading with his son, his wife suddenly appeared, to thank him for the funeral, but to point out that he had been a little careless in his preparations for it. One of her shoes, a golden

slipper, had escaped the funeral pyre. It had fallen behind a chest and been overlooked, even as its twin was thrown into the flames. And sure enough, when the man pulled the chest out from the wall and looked, there lay the golden slipper. It was burned the following day and he never saw his wife's ghost again.

Lucian is not the most reliable guide, of course. He had a wicked sense of humor and a fine appreciation of the absurd. Perhaps this story, too, was invented. So we turn to a documented tale, exhumed from the pages of the nineteenth-century American press by the doyen of modern spectral archaeologists, Chris Woodyard. Her Ghosts from the Past series of books is littered with stories that might not convince the modern skeptic, but were good enough for the editors of bygone local newspapers. Such as this little item, retrieved from the pages of the *New Haven Register* of February 18, 1886.

> Yesterday morning four women, respectable in appearance and advanced in years, entered the side gate of the Roman Catholic cemetery, proceeded along one of the avenues and halted at a new made grave. Presently two men made their appearance and with shovels opened the grave. The women stood with bated breath, tears running down their faces. Presently the box which enclosed the casket and remains of a young girl was reached. One of the women gave a low scream. The strong arms of the men raised the box and placed it above ground. The lid was taken off the box and the casket opened. The features of a young, handsome, and beloved daughter of one of the women was exposed to view. The men looked on as if in wonder at what followed. None but the women understood it. Busy fingers went through the dead girl's hair and shroud and all the pins that could be found were removed. The string which has placed around the feet after death was removed. A needle and thread were brought into use to supply the place of the pins in the hair and shroud. The lid was then placed on the casket and the remains lowered into the grave, which was filled once more.
>
> This strange proceeding gave rise to many inquiries. Only a few could answer them. It was learned that there is a strong superstition among the Irish people that if a corpse is buried tied or with pins or with even a knot at the end of a thread that sews the shroud the soul will be confined

> to the grave for all eternity, and that the persons guilty of the blunder will be disturbed by the restrained spirits while on earth. Thus it was, according to the testimony of the one of the women, who said she had been bothered for two nights previous by the ghost of the girl, now all were happy. This is not the first time that an incident of the kind has occurred in the same cemetery.

Or, from the same source, this tale retrieved from the archives of the *St. Albans* [VT] *Daily Messenger* of October 12, 1876, an "old maid" in a West Baltimore boarding house, who left instructions that she should be buried "not . . . in any costly dress, but in a plain shroud, and threatened to haunt the house if her direction was not heeded."

Of course it wasn't. Believing her last wish to simply be an old lady's modesty, her friends instead had her interred "in an elegant silk and adorned the casket with beautiful flowers."

Two weeks later, the boarding house was bereft of guests, all of them driven away by the old woman whose spirit simply walked the house at night, "[paying] visits to every sleeping room in the house. The landlady is talking of having the body exhumed, the silk dress taken off, and the plain shroud put on."

More recent tales of a similar fiber abound, reminders one and all that, for all of our scientific and philosophical advances, we're really not that far divorced from the fears of our most distant forefathers. Indeed, given the terror that stories such as these are intended to arouse in the reader, who is to say that mankind did not become *more*, rather than less superstitious, once it stopped believing the evidence of its own senses, and started listening instead to the lies of its priests and scientists?

Author and philosopher Thomas Ligotti once said that consciousness was an evolutionary accident, a fluke that gave man, alone of all living creatures, one piece of bitter knowledge. The fact that the universe is endless, immeasurable, and utterly indifferent, while man is the absolute opposite in every respect. Other philosophers have said much the same thing.

Yet, if we accept the existence of ghosts, such lofty pronouncements are balled up and thrown away, for we too become endless and immeasurable. Only "indifferent" remains debatable, because within the multiple schools of thought that attempt to discern what a haunting *means*, we again have

multiple options.

It could be that hauntings are conscious, and that they are fired by as many different emotions and motives as there are emotions and motives in the first place. Regret, joy, exasperation, loss, spite . . . that brilliant early 2000s TV series *Dead Like Me* even suggested that hauntings are motivated by envy, and that is certainly something to consider. The legendary Enfield Poltergeist, on the other hand, when asked why it tormented people so, simply admitted, "I like annoying you."

It could be that hauntings are *un*conscious, and that ghosts thrive on a plain of existence that is utterly separate from ours, while taking place in the same location. Meaning their actions—the haunting itself—occur regardless of whether we (meaning humans) are there to see them. The 2001 movie *The Others*, directed by Alejandro Amenábar and starring Nicole Kidman, investigated that scenario to excellent ends.

It could be that hauntings are neither of these things; that they are simply "recordings" of past events that are caused to "play" by the convergence of certain conditions, be they emotional, meteorological, or whatever else. Author Nigel Kneale conjured this scenario in *The Stone Tape*, an early 1970s British television play that has been ranked among the most terrifying fictions of the modern age.

Or perhaps they are all of these things.

Other theories abound, of course. One of the most remarkable ghost stories ever written was the work not of a novelist, but of a physician, the Scotsman Robert MacNish (1802–1837). He once administered to a female patient who haunted herself, beckoning from other rooms, going about her business all around the house, behaving in every way like a "traditional" ghost, but visible only to her own self.

Sometimes it's not a case of people seeing ghosts. Sometimes, ghosts see people . . . as Nicole Kidman discovered in 2001's *The Others*.

Dimension Films/Photofest

MacNish delved deeper into the woman's life, learning that she was trapped within a marriage of the most mind-numbing boredom, and that her entire existence had become that of a humdrum drone. Yet she was an intelligent woman. So what did her mind do? It created a mirror image of itself, and sent it out to lead a more fulfilling existence.

Close to two centuries later, written up in the November 2014 edition of *Current Biology*, scientists at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology claimed to have identified those parts of the brain that are responsible for generating what we might call the "presence" of a ghost, the sensation that there is someone standing close by, or watching, even though we know we're alone at the time.

According to Dr. Giulio Rognini, one of the researchers involve in the experiment, "Our brain possesses several representations of our body in space. Under normal conditions, it is able to assemble a unified self-perception of the self from these representations. But when the system malfunctions . . . this can sometimes create a second representation of one's own body, which is no longer perceived as 'me' but as someone else, a 'presence.'"

But of course that explanation, that a ghost is some form of manifestation

conjured from within one's own self, works only up to a point. Unless, that is, one's mind also happens to move down some very disturbing corridors indeed, and habitually views itself as a headless Hessian, a drowned pirate, a blind bluesman, a Civil War surgeon. To name just four of the manifestations whom we will be shortly encountering.

Neither does it address the reactions that animals . . . pet dogs and cats, but wild beasts too . . . are documented to exhibit when there's a ghost on the loose. Nor the evidence, if we might call it that, produced by the vast array of instruments and machines that man, in his infinite curiosity (and, perhaps, gullibility), has employed over the years to capture tangible proof of a ghost's existence.

Recorded sounds, inexplicable photographs, temperature changes. EMF Meters, Full Spectrum Cams, EVP Recorders, TriField Meters, Laser Grids, Infrared / Nightvision IR Lights, Thermal Cameras, Interactive Cuddly Toys. . . . Seriously. Google "Boo Buddy" and discover how "BooBuddy . . . investigates the paranormal with you . . . BooBuddy loves asking EVP questions in order to promote a response. If the environment changes . . . BooBuddy responds appropriately, to let you know that there may be a presence. Just sit BooBuddy down and turn it on to get to work. BooBuddy will do the rest starting with baseline readings. For best results and documentation set a recorder or cam by the bear to document any responses. BooBuddy just loves being on camera!"

Sometimes, of course, there *is* a logical explanation for what might otherwise seem a supernatural occurrence. Discussing, in song, the possible return of the murdered milkman Ernie, comedian Benny Hill asked, "Was that the trees a-rustling? Or the hinges of the gate? Or Ernie's ghostly [milk bottles] a-rattling in their crate?" It is a chilling piece of imagery—although you will notice that, if you reverse the two lines, it becomes far less foreboding. Was it the ghostly bottles? Or just the wind? And this raises what is possibly the most common explanation of them all, for every haunting that ever was. The possibility that *it's all in your mind* and, if there are multiple witnesses, it's Mass Hysteria.

Assuming, of course, you believe in that. Some people don't.

Some ghosts are very easily snuffed out.

As a thirteen-year-old, unsettled in a house that was reliably reported to be haunted by my stepmother's first husband, I spent many a night lying in bed,

in the room where the dead man's corpse had been laid out, listening to footsteps that advanced, slowly and heavily, along the hallway outside my room, before halting at my own bedroom door.

As if wondering what to do next.

The door never opened, the handle was never turned. Nothing happened and, in some ways, that was worse. At least if the door was flung wide open, and a howling specter burst into the room, I could poop myself, scream, and get it over with.

Instead, I waited. Night after night after long, sleepless night. One time, desperate to calm my thoughts, I switched on the radio—only for Bobby "Boris" Pickett and the Crypt Kickers' "Monster Mash" to come crackling over the airwaves.

Maybe that was the night, exhausted by suspense, fed up with fear, and driven to feats of superhuman daring by the effects of sleeplessness, that I finally opened the door to my nocturnal near-visitor. Stood in the open doorway as the fiendish footsteps approached, gazed unblinkingly out into the hallway as they drew closer and closer . . .

. . . and then the denouement. The debunking. The faint, but unmistakable sound of our row-home neighbors using the bathroom they had installed on the other side of my bedroom wall.

I laid the ghost to rest the following morning at breakfast, and my stepbrother never forgave me. Neither, in a way, did I. Whether it scares the pants off you or not, there is a certain pleasure to be drawn from living in what is believed to be a haunted house. Far more than can be derived from living in one that simply isn't very well insulated.

Imagination is a powerful deceiver. It takes its cues not only from what it perceives at the time, but also from a lifetime of prior experiences, assumptions and beliefs, actual and otherwise.

A reader with a healthy appetite for the masterful fictions of the author M. R. James will regard a howling wind and a tapping on the window in a very different light to one whose literary tastes do not extend beyond an annotated set of baseball statistics. It's like the nineteenth-century professor and author Charles Ham once said—"Those who believe in ghosts always see them." Or, as George Bernard Shaw told Henry James, "No man who doesn't believe in a ghost ever sees one."

Neither declaration is actually true. The literature of the supernatural

abounds with supposed true-life experiences that begin “I never believed in ghosts until . . .” But the notion that belief becomes easier the more fervently one believes in something is one that few people should feel too comfortable arguing with.

For every soul who believes in ghosts (or doesn’t, but has somehow been talked around), of course, there is, and always has been, another who pooh-poohs the very notion. Earlier mentions of the pyramids and Stonehenge testify to the beliefs of the ancients, but there is a considerable body of work that testifies equally resolutely to their disbeliefs—as Lucian of Samosata, again, reminds us with the tale of Democritus of Abdera.

Here was a man who was so opposed to the existence of ghosts that he actually took up residence in a tomb at a cemetery. Nor could his disbelief be shaken, not even by local youths who enjoyed painting their bodies and donning frightful masks, and “haunting” his home for kicks. Old Democritus just told them to go away . . . and to take their *black* paint, and *black* sheets with them. A sentiment, if we might digress for a moment, that certainly gives modern spookophiles something to think about.

Unlike modern ghosts, Roman spirits did not caper about in white. Indeed, ghosts in general do not seem to have adopted white sheets until as late as the seventeenth century—at around the same time as the English Parliament passed the series of laws known as the Burial in Woollen Acts of 1666, 1678 and 1680, requiring that the dead be buried either in woolen shrouds of pure English manufacture, or naked in the case of the poor. The majority of these shrouds were, of course, white.

Still we can learn much from Democritus, including the fact that he was content to dismiss his visitors as simply high-spirited youths. A far cry from the citizens of the English city of Portsmouth, in August 2014, who summoned the law to deal with a miscreant hanging out at a churchyard, “throwing [his] arms in the air and saying ‘wooooooo.’” The penalty for imitating a ghost in modern times? A $58 fine, plus $67 more in costs and other expenses.

But we might also say that both Democritus and the “victims” of the Portsmouth spook were lucky. Their tormentors were as human as they were. A far less agreeable fate awaited the protagonist of what is probably the best-known of all latter-day stories about similarly situated unbelievers, M. R. James’s “There Was a Man Dwelt by a Churchyard.”

Here, too, a graveside home is inhabited by a miserly gent who professes to neither care, nor believe, that his neighbors could ever be anything more than silent rotting clay. And so, having witnessed one particular burial, and in particular heard the telltale chinking of coin being thrown into the grave alongside its occupant, our miser waited until dark, when he was certain that the coast was clear, and then set out to retrieve the treasure.

Which he did, very successfully.

Back in his rooms a few nights later, he was disturbed first by sounds and then by shadows.

James, the master, completes the picture:

> Between him and the moonlight was the black outline of the curious bunched head . . . Then there was a figure in the room. Dry earth rattled on the floor. A low cracked voice said "Where is it?" and steps went hither and thither, faltering steps as of one walking with difficulty.
>
> It could be seen now and again, peering into corners, stooping to look under chairs; finally it could be heard fumbling at the doors of the cupboard in the wall, throwing them open.
>
> There was a scratching of long nails on the empty shelves.
>
> The figure whipped round, stood for an instant at the side of the bed, raised its arms and, with a hoarse scream of "YOU'VE GOT IT. . . ."

Read it aloud to a campsite filled with impressionable youth. Even when you know the punch line, "There Was a Man Dwelt by a Churchyard" is one of the most effective ghost stories ever written—meaning it's one of the most frightening; and in many ways that's what this is all about, isn't it?

We do not seek the truth about whether or not ghosts exist because we're searching for the knowledge that something, *anything*, lies on the other side of our own demises.

We're not seeking philosophical justification or religious solace.

We're not even trying to answer a question that has exercised both the human imagination and the human intellect for millennia.

Really, all we want . . . and we can camouflage it beneath as much high-fallutin' intellectualism and science as we like . . . what we want is a jolly good scare. And if that means sitting up all night in an allegedly haunted house, waiting for something, anything, to show its face, then that's what

we’re going to do.

But first, any questions?

Yes. I thought there probably would be.

1

A Very Old Story Indeed

The First Ghosts in History

Ghosts exist, or have been recorded, throughout time.

Their nature has changed, their purpose has altered, their attitudes toward the living have shifted. But essentially, the first ghost is probably as old as the first human death. And the last ghost? Theoretically, the last ghost will be born when the last human dies. Even if there'll be nobody there to see it.

In the ancient Near East, at the dawn of recorded history, becoming a ghost was simply the next step in life. As one breathed one's last as a human, so one breathed one's first as a ghost. The spirit would possess the personality and the memory of its former living self, and upon reaching the netherworld, it would continue to exist with only the possibility of a change in status and position, and a new network of friends to denote the change.

Back among the living, meanwhile, old friends and relatives were required to make regular offerings of food, drink and other items to ensure their lost loved one remained comfortable. Because, if they failed to do so, misfortune, sickness and sundry other symptoms of a traditional haunting might befall them—suggesting that, no matter how well loved a person may have been in life, in death they can become petty-minded and spiteful. The first poltergeists, perhaps.

Went to the Fortune-Teller . . .

One of the oldest surviving ghost stories of all is that told in the Old Testament, in the First Book of Samuel (verses 28:3–19). There, the Witch of Endor, a renowned medium, is asked to summon the spirit of the prophet Samuel for King Saul. She does so, and promptly lets out a terrified scream.

Saul asks her what she has seen.

“I see a spirit rising up out of the ground.”
“What does it look like?”
“It looks like an old man wearing a robe.”

The Biblical tale of the witch of Endor is one of the oldest ghost stories still to circulate. In this 1813 engraving by James Taylor (after a Salvator Rosa painting), Saul consults the ghost of Samuel, whom the witch has summoned at Saul’s request.

Wellcome Images/Wikimedia Commons

A cantankerous old man, too. Setting the stage for every subsequent spirit who has reacted bad-temperedly to being conjured into being, the spectral Samuel’s first words are “Why are you bothering me by bringing me up like this?”

Samuel is invoked because he possessed the gift of prophecy, and that’s what ancient ghosts were especially prized for, their ability to foretell the future. Spirits found in the writings of the Greek Homer, and multiple other sources, too, are likewise imbibed, and even today—when ghosties and ghoulies have, for the most part, gotten out of the fortune-telling business—still the occasional spirit passes by with its warnings of what the future holds *unless*. . . .

The first-century Roman author Plutarch (46–120 CE) recording that both the tyrant Dion of Syracuse, and Brutus, the murderer of Julius Caesar, were warned of their imminent demises by a grisly ghost; and then recruiting those same mighty men to his side in the battle against people who refused to believe in ghosts:

"It has been maintained," Plutarch wrote, "that no man in his senses ever saw a ghost: that these are the delusive visions of women and children, or of men whose intellects are impaired by some physical infirmity, and who believe that their diseased imaginations are of divine origin.

"But if Dion and Brutus, men of strong and philosophic minds, whose understandings were not affected by any constitutional infirmity—if such men could place so much faith in the appearance of specters as to give an account of them to their friends, I see no reason why we should depart from the opinion of the ancients that men had their evil genii, who disturbed them with fears and distressed their virtues. . . ."

Other Latin prophets stepped forth from beyond the grave. The future proconsul Curtius Rufus had his glorious destiny revealed to him by a positively Amazonian specter, who appeared to him while he still worked as a lowly attendant to the governor of Africa. Likewise, had it not been for the intervention of the spirit of her dead husband, Sychaeus, Dido would never have founded Carthage.

> At length, in dead of night, the ghost appears
> Of her unhappy lord: the specter stares,
> And, with erected eyes, his bloody bosom bares.
> The cruel altars and his fate he tells,
> And the dire secret of his house reveals,
> Then warns the widow, with her household gods,
> To seek a refuge in remote abodes.
> Last, to support her in so long a way,
> He shows her where his hidden treasure lay.
>
> —Virgil's *Aeneid*, translated by John Dryden

We return to Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*. The ghost of Jacob Marley appears to his old partner, the miser Ebenezer Scrooge, to warn him that he is to be visited by three spirits. One will conjure images from

Scrooge's youth—the Ghost of Christmas Past. One will show him scenes being enacted that very day—the Ghost of Christmas Present. But the third, the Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come . . . he is the most terrible of them all.

"The Phantom slowly, gravely, silently approached. When it came near him, Scrooge bent down upon his knee; for in the very air through which this Spirit moved it seemed to scatter gloom and mystery. It was shrouded in a deep black garment, which concealed its head, its face, its form, and left nothing of it visible save one outstretched hand."

Scrooge was transfixed, his entire being "thrilled . . . with a vague uncertain horror, to know that behind the dusky shroud there were ghostly eyes intently fixed upon him, while he, though he stretched his own to the utmost, could see nothing but a spectral hand and one great heap of black." And he knew, even before the shade showed him his own death, his own grave, that unless he was to mend his ways, cast off a lifetime of miserable miserliness, this would indeed be his fate.

Even in Dickens's day (the tale was first published in 1843), this latter ghost was old-fashioned. Effective, yes; Scrooge did indeed mend his ways. But old-fashioned all the same. As early as the age of Homer, writing approximately nine centuries before Charles Dickens first picked up a pen, spirits were already taking up other pursuits, and changing their appearance, too.

What Do Ghosts Look Like?

To the ancient Greeks, ghosts existed either as insubstantial mists or vapors; or they resembled their earthbound selves, often in the exact same form as they possessed at the moment of death. Meaning that whatever killed them was killing them still. Neither the decapitated equestrian of Washington Irving's Sleepy Hollow, nor Nearly Headless Nick of *Harry Potter* fame, would have seemed strange to the people of *The Iliad*.

That said, the vaporous spirits appear to have been the most plentiful. "'All people are like this when they are dead," declares the ghost of Anticlea in Homer's *Odyssey*. "The sinews no longer hold the flesh and bones together; these perish in the fierceness of consuming fire as soon as life has left the body, and the soul flits away as though it were a dream."

Homer's ghosts are largely benevolent. Over time, however, the Greek

ghost grew vengeful. The play *Oresteia*, composed in the fifth century BCE, is littered with supernatural elements that climax, in its third and final surviving part, *The Eumenides*, with the manifestation of the murdered Clytemnestra's ghost, demanding that her killer, her son Orestes, be brought to grisly justice.

It was the Greeks, too, who first suggested that ghosts are most at home in the vicinity of their own final resting places. The first haunted cemeteries were a Greek invention, and it was the Greeks who initiated a ceremony that is still enacted in much of the world today, with a single day of the year turned over to honoring our familial deceased with food and gifts left at their graveside. Again, failure to do so could lead to a most unfortunate haunting.

According to the Roman philosopher Marcus Tullius Cicero (106–43 BCE), the dead physically lived on underground, and were even provided with their own means of traveling to the world of the living, in the form of a deep trench dug alongside the city walls. Vaulted and then closed with the *lapis manalis*, or "stone of the dead," this trench was regarded as the entrance to the underworld for the dead of that town. Corn would be thrown into the trench before it was closed, and an altar erected over it.

But on three days a year, August 25, October 5, and November 8, the trench would be opened, the stone would be removed, and the dead would be permitted to come and go as they pleased between our world and theirs. The dead had their own festival, too, *Dies Parentales*, held every year between February 13 and 21.

Plutarch, again, brings us one of our first stories of a haunted house—or, to be more exact a haunted *bath*house—as he retells the story of a blighted structure in his own hometown, the village of Chaeronea in Bœotia, Greece.

Therein, a murdered man, a certain Damon, made so much noise, moaning and groaning day and night, that the townspeople finally abandoned the building and bricked up its doors. Yet "to this very day," wrote Plutarch, "those who live in the neighborhood imagine that they see strange sights and are terrified with cries of sorrow."

Imagine? Maybe, maybe not.

Such tales were crucial to the Roman mindset, reinforcing as they did the harmony between mortal and immortal that was so much a part of the era's culture and belief system. But ghosts were also becoming a form of entertainment, too, and ghost stories were being told for the sake of

themselves. To scare people.

Another common trait arose, that of the ghost who haunts in order to draw attention to some unforgivable injustice—often one that was perpetrated upon himself, at the end of life.

Pliny tells us of a house in Athens that was haunted by the most dreadful of spirits, a moaning, groaning apparition wrapped in clanking chains. At first, the sounds seemed to come from a distance, and the inhabitants of the house could almost believe that they were hearing simply a tumult that was taking place outside, and nothing for them to worry about.

Over time, however, the sounds drew closer and closer to the house. They were heard at the gate; they were heard in the grounds; they were heard within the building itself. Until finally, there appeared before them the apparition of a dirty, emaciated old man with wild hair and an unkempt beard, his hands and feet tightly shackled. Uttering, as he stood there, a barrage of moans and groans that were so terrifying that, not only could the residents of the house not sleep, some of them are said even to have died of fright.

Eventually the house was deserted and, for a long time, it seemed set to remain that way. Word of its nocturnal visitor spread, and the locals avoided even passing by. A few would-be purchasers inspected the premises, but none would take that final step and buy the place. Until one day a philosopher named Athenodorus arrived in the city and, casting around for a suitable house to purchase, saw the FOR SALE sign.

The price was right and, although everybody warned him about the house’s reputation and its unearthly occupant, he would not be dissuaded from purchasing it. He moved in, established his household and, that very same night, having dismissed his slaves and settled down to write, he caught his first glimpse of the spirit, the sounds that grew closer and closer until they were echoing off the walls of his room, and the awful apparition that was responsible for them.

He laid down his stylus and looked at the ghost. The ghost raised its shackled hands and looked back at him. Athenodorus rose, and the ghost beckoned for him to follow it, and so he did, through the house and out into the yard. And on the exact spot the ghost suddenly vanished, Athenodorus made a mark and, the following day, called a magistrate to witness the ground being dug up.

There, bones and chains marked the place where some poor unfortunate had been thrown hastily into the ground and covered over; and once the bones had been gathered and a decent burial arranged, the ghost was never heard of again.

How many times in the centuries since then has a variant on *that* particular story been spun?

The First Celebrity Spirits

We can credit Pliny, too, with one of our earliest tales of a celebrity ghost, appearing to a biographer named Fannius as he worked upon a Life of the recently deceased Emperor Nero (37–68 CE).

Lying on his couch late one night, browsing the work he had already completed, Fannius suddenly realized that he was not alone. Nero himself had appeared alongside him and was now engaged in silently, but surely unhappily, reading the story so far—a catalog of debauchery, violence and tyranny that included, but was not limited to, dipping Christians in oil and then employing them as living candles; murdering anybody he even remotely suspected of opposing his ideas; and playing his fiddle while he watched Rome burn. Watching as the subject of his writings read deeper and deeper into the biography, poor Fannius became convinced that he was to be the emperor's next victim.

He abandoned his writings that night, and never returned to that particular topic again.

With such solid beginnings in the cradles of European civilization, ghosts inevitably became a key element in the landscape of the Dark Ages. But while early Christianity sought to at least place ghosts within some form of credible context, what the Church said and what the churchgoers believed tended to be two very different things.

Some of Western Europe's most enduring ghost stories were birthed within these conflicting philosophies, and so the belief in ghosts continued to spread, outliving each and every one of the other "facts of life" that the medieval mind took for granted. And what a marvelous thought that is, the fact that were a thirteenth-century scholar to find himself transported to the present day, there is just one subject, and one subject alone, upon which he and we would be able to converse with no need for extraneous instruction or

explanation whatsoever.

Everything else, from religion to agriculture, from communication to travel, and on to the very shape of the world, has changed beyond all recognition in the centuries since he learned about them.

But a ghost remains a ghost, and the only signal difference would be, our thirteenth-century traveler would probably feel more at ease with the subject than his modern counterpart.

2

The Ghostly Gazetteer: Alabama to Arkansas

An Artful Assortment of Astonishing Activity

In **Oxford, Alabama**, Hell's Gate Bridge is so named because, if you stop your car on the bridge and turn around, you *will* see the fires of Hell blazing behind you. And if you turn off all your lights as well, an unseen somebody will climb into the vehicle alongside you and remain there long enough to leave a wet patch on the seat. Apparently a courting couple were killed here many years ago, when their car went off the bridge into the water. One of them is still trying to summon help.

Until the structure's destruction in a fire, the ghost of a hanged slave haunted another bridge, the Oakachoy Covered Bridge on Newman Road, on the outskirts of **Alexander City, Alabama**.

A horse-drawn carriage clatters through the streets of **Goodwater, Alabama**, a baby crying on board. Nobody knows why, or who the child is. But the story that highwaymen once halted such a vehicle and, in the course of their robbery, murdered an infant is a popular and believable explanation.

Even if it was not overrun with cold spots and bedeviled by shadows and mysterious lights, the Old Bryce lunatic asylum in **Northport, Alabama**, *looks* haunted. So naturally, people believe it is.

Nobody is quite certain who haunts the public library in **Albertville,**

Alabama. Only that something seems to enjoy rattling the doors, switching on the lights, and running water in the sink at times when nobody should be doing any of those things.

Built in 1833, Oakleigh House, in Mobile, Alabama, has been credited with a female ghost who walks the front parlor, a wealth of poltergeist activity and a host of mysterious movements and voices.

Photo by Altairisfar/Wikimedia Commons

Was there really a ghastly multiple homicide at the Parkwood Apartments in **Birmingham, Alabama**, one January night sometime in the 1970s? Maybe there was, maybe there wasn't. But the smell of burning flesh that permeates the walls, and the blood that oozes from an upstairs foyer certainly suggest something untoward happened here.

Horrific death and ghastly memories pervade another **Birmingham** landmark, the old Sloss Furnaces—without which, it is said, the city itself might never have risen. Still a vast and vastly impressive presence on the landscape, the original Sloss Furnaces were erected during the 1880s, although the modern buildings are no older than the 1900s. The ghosts, however, date from throughout the site's lifespan. At least sixty workers perished here, often in the most dreadful accidents, and many of them remain here still.

The ruined walls that mark the site of the old Sturdivant Mansion in **Jacksons Gap, Alabama**, are said to be haunted—perhaps by the gruesomely murdered victims of the madman who local lore insists once ran

amok in the home.

A Civil War soldier named Sidney Grimlett walks the University Chapel in **Auburn, Alabama**. Or, rather, he hops. Grievously wounded, he had his leg amputated in the hospital that was set up here during the conflict, but it was too late to save his life. He is heard more than he is seen, rattling things and opening drawers.

In 1874, a tornado swept through the town of **Tuscumbia, Alabama**, destroying or damaging all in its path. The Winston House took only a glancing blow from the storm, but when the rubble was cleared, the home's owner, Judith Winston, was found buried beneath it. Horribly injured, she was carried to the still-intact front bedroom, where she died shortly after. But when a storm is approaching, the walls of the house's entry hall will weep in her memory.

A headless lady awaits late-night motorists as they pass by Bayview Cemetery in **Ketchikan, Alaska**.

Nonsmokers should probably avoid the Gakona Lodge and Trading Post in **Gakona, Alaska**. Not unless they want a lungful of secondhand tobacco smoke from the unseen and unknown nicotine enthusiast who can be heard walking and talking around the building.

The Red Onion Saloon in **Skagway, Alaska**, was once a thriving brothel. No murders or other untoward events were recorded here, but some of the girls seem to still be in residence, if the footsteps and giggling are anything to judge by . . . the breaths of perfume that catch the unsuspecting nose . . . and the care with which the plants on the second floor are nurtured, whether earthly hands water them or not.

The Silverbow Inn in the state capital **Juneau, Alaska**, was once a bakery, owned by an Austrian named Gus Messerschmidt. He passed away in 1938, but he still rises bright and early every morning to make certain that the day's baking is begun on time.

In **Anchorage, Alaska**, the Dimond Center shopping mall is the height of

retail modernity. Such a shame that it was built on a Native American burial ground—whose disturbed denizens, it is said, are most frequently seen in the public restrooms.

Anchorage also boasts the Historic Anchorage Hotel, close by the spot where the city's first chief of police was killed. He walks the hotel today, in the company occasionally of a woman in white.

"Alex! Come and get your ball!" With those words—and, of course, a basketball left on the auditorium floor—one can summon the spirit of a young lad who drowned when the ice broke while he played, on the site of the NANA Museum of the Arctic in **Kotzebue, Alaska**.

Angels and babies alike haunt the corridors of the Fairbanks Memorial Hospital in **Fairbanks, Alaska**.

The Edgerton Highway in **Chitina, Alaska**, where it runs alongside the Old Copper Railroad, is no place to leave tools or machinery. Every passing road crew knows that. For they will disappear, to be replaced by the sound of children's laughter.

One of the halls at the **Northern Arizona University** is haunted by a mischievous female former student, who delights in locking people in the lavatory and pulling the blankets off the beds of unsuspecting sleepers.

Wickenberg, Arizona, is one of the state's most captivating ghost towns, still peopled by some of its most active ghosts. The site of the old Vulture gold mine is especially active, it is said.

The Grand Hotel in **Jerome, Arizona**, is a former hospital with a grisly reputation. Aside from the maintenance worker who was crushed by an elevator, at least two other workers committed suicide there. All are certainly numbered among the various apparitions that have allegedly been seen and heard over the years.

Fire destroyed the original Gadsden Hotel in **Douglas, Arizona**, leading to it being rebuilt in 1929. Ghosts old and new crowd the corridors, though, as

ranchers, miners, cattlemen and entrepreneurs of all persuasions continue enjoying the original hotel's legendary luxury.

In **Yuma, Arizona**, the old Territorial Prison is now the centerpiece of a state historical park. Just be careful what you wear when you visit. There's a ghost there who apparently enjoys pinching people who wear red.

At the Vista Village Apartments in **Phoenix, Arizona**, it is said that there's a ghost who will do your housework for you. Scary!!!!!

When the gunfight at the O.K. Corral was over, Boot Hill Graveyard was where they took the losers. This **Tombstone, Arizona**, legend still echoes to the sounds of gunshots and groans, as the feud and fighting live on.

Nobody seems quite certain who . . . or what . . . haunts Medicine Forest, near **Whiteriver, Arizona**. But all who have heard it have their own ghastly images pinned inside their minds.

St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in **Nogales, Arizona**, was built on a Native American burial ground, but though actively haunted, the ghosts tend to be friendly—perhaps, surmised an early pastor, because they were kindly disposed to Christianity.

A woman in white walks the Vision Quest Lodge in **Elfrida, Arizona**.

The Fox Theatre in **Tucson, Arizona**, is haunted inside and out. Within, the ghosts amuse themselves by moving things around. Without, on West Congress Street, they apparently panhandle. And the Hotel Congress on East Congress looms large in the legend of the gangster John Dillinger, and his spirit has frequently been seen here. But so have those of at least two suicides, one of whom died in Room 214, the other in Room 242, and neither of whom seem to have checked out yet.

Built in 1902, and famous for the friezes that gave the building its name, the Owls Club Mansion in Tucson has long been rumored to be haunted. And not by owls.

Photo by Dave Thompson

Meanwhile, if you've ever had your hair pulled while visiting the **Tucson** Medical Center, or had your chair tugged away just as you were about to sit down, a little girl's ghost is said to be the culprit. Either that, or you need to be more careful whom you hang out with.

Also in **Tucson**, a faceless, levitating num is said to haunt the courtyard of St. Augustine's Cathedral.

The Rialto Theatre Music Hall in **El Dorado, Arkansas**, opened in 1929 and has suffered several closures since then. Whether open or closed, however, mysterious lights, voices and footsteps haunt its hallways.

Stand outside the Old Courthouse in **Fort Smith, Arkansas**, for long enough, and you will see and hear them—the condemned men hanging on the gallows that once decorated the courthouse's forecourt.

A baby cries and a woman screams at Des Arc Bridge over Cadron Creek on **Faulkner County, Arkansas**.

In **Bono, Arkansas**, old maps will lead you to the site of the now-demolished Bono Bridge, which once passed gracefully over the railroad tracks. Sometimes, it is said, it still *does* pass over them.

Just outside **Woodson, Arkansas**, on Highway 365, a female hitchhiker waits for accommodating drivers to pick her up and take her home. But when the car arrives at the address she gave, she has long since disappeared.

The aptly named Witches Hollow in **Batesville, Arkansas**, is haunted by a witch who once lived here, and who murdered her husband, too.

The Crescent Hotel in **Eureka Springs, Arkansas**, was once an unlicensed hospital, operated by a conman without an ounce of medical skill. But he practiced regardless and his patients suffered accordingly. In fact, you can sometimes hear them dying still.

Many years ago, a man walking the railroad lines in **Crossett, Arkansas**, was hit by an oncoming train and decapitated by the impact. Nobody knows what he was looking for then, but there is no mistaking his mission today. He's still out there walking the lines, a lantern in his hand, searching for his missing head.

3

New World, Old Fears

What Was America’s First-Ever Ghost Story?

Imagine a world where there were no diseases. A world before modern science and enlightenment came along to plague us with bacteria, viruses, infections and bugs. Where man and germ lived in perfect harmony, each going about his or her own business without a care for what the other was doing.

How, then, did people become sick?

Ghosts did it. Ghosts and witches and demons and the evil spirits that the Cherokee people called the *Shina*.

There were other theories, of course. “Miasma,” or bad air, was commonly considered the culprit whenever a disease took hold upon an entire community, and this was still science’s reasoning until well into the nineteenth century. Clouds of putrescent gas, harmful odors and vile vapors would rise from the earth (a hidden gateway to Hell was often considered a likely source) and smite all who came in range.

Another school of thought, influenced by the English botanist Richard Bradley (1688–1732), sought to credit microscopic insects with spreading their peculiar poisons around. Tinier than any other known to man, these little beasts would hop, jump and fly from victim to victim, and so swiftly that it was impossible to guard against them.

It would be another century after Bradley before the Italian entomologist Agostino Bassi (1773–1856) looked into the possibility that germs were really responsible for mankind’s ills, and a few decades more before Louis Pasteur (1822–1895) proved his theory to the satisfaction of the medical majority.

Prior to that, it was either bad air, bad bugs or bad spirits, and the further back in history one travels, the stronger the belief in the latter, if only because the spirits informed every walk of life. Of course matters of health and death should be within their purview.

Yet this all-pervading relationship between the natural and supernatural worlds also obscures the separation that we, the modern reader, demand from our ghost stories. A ghost story, after all, is not a story about witches and wizards, about gods and goddesses, about the spirits of the land or the energies of the earth. There are no monsters in ghost stories, no zombies, vampires or werewolves. Hobbits are verboten, Wookiees, too.

A ghost story is, quite simply, the story of a ghost. And a ghost, to offer up a particularly flippant biographical summary, is someone who lived, who died, and who haunted. No matter what other circumstances may be assigned to a ghost story, no matter what the spirit's motives may be, or what the tale's moral might teach, it all comes down to those three simple facts. Lived. Died. Haunted. Subtract any one of them from the equation and it doesn't matter what other supernatural elements may be present. It is not a ghost story.

Kill the witch, the monster, the vampire, and then have it return as a vengeful spirit. Fine. Otherwise, file it away in another collection.

It is for this reason, when seeking out the oldest American ghost story, that so few collections of purportedly traditional Native American tales fall within the parameters of what we traditionally expect from such a designation.

In a society where what we might term the average ghost was regarded as a part of the furniture, if not literally the family, then no story of an average haunting would have been considered worth recording. The Native American ghost was a very different creature altogether.

Or was it?

The Rolling Head

Stith Thompson's 1929 collection *Tales of the North American Indians* tells the tale of the Rolling Head; the story of the family—a husband and wife, and two children—who lived together in a solitary tent, some distance away from any other settlement. Their life together was happy, settled, loving. There was just one thing that perplexed the husband. Every day, before he went out hunting, he always painted his wife's face and body. And every evening,

when he returned home, the paint had washed away.

One day he asked her why? What had happened to it? And, quite reasonably, she replied that she'd taken a bath. Her husband didn't believe her, though, so the following morning, having set off as usual, he then doubled back to the nearby lake, built himself a hiding place and waited. And sure enough, shortly after, his wife made her own way to the lakeside, removed her clothing and, plunging her painted body naked into the water, she called out, "Come! I am waiting."

Then a huge snake rose out of the lake, and asked her if her husband had gone hunting. She answered, "Yes," and the snake came to her, wrapping itself around her like a lover. . . .

Thompson tells the rest of the tale.

> The man had watched them, and now, leaving his hiding-place, he jumped on the snake, and with a large knife cut it in pieces and at last killed it. Then he caught his wife and killed her. He cut her up, and took her meat home and gave it to his children. He cooked his wife, and the children unknowingly ate their mother.
>
> Then the man said to them: "Tell your mother when she comes home that I went to get more meat which I left hanging on a tree so that the wolves cannot reach it." And he went away. The younger child said: "Our mother is merely teasing us by staying away." But the older girl answered: "Do not say anything against our mother."
>
> Then their mother's head came rolling to them; and it said: "I am very sorry that my children have eaten me up."
>
> The two children ran away, but the head pursued them. At last they were worn out, but their mother's head still rolled after them. Then the older girl drew a line or mark on the ground and so deep a hole opened that the head could not cross. The younger girl was very hungry. She said to her sister: "Look at that deer." The older girl looked at the deer, and it fell down dead as if shot. So they ate of it. Then someone was kind to them and helped them, and they lived in a large lodge and had much food of various kinds to eat. Two large panthers and two large black bears guarded them against all wild animals and persons.
>
> A camp of people was starving. Neither buffalo nor smaller game could be found. The people heard that the children had an abundance of

> food of all kinds, and they all moved to them. When they arrived the children invited them, and the various companies came and ate with them. Finally they all went out again; only the children's father now stayed with them again. But they regretted what he had done to them. So they caused the lions to jump upon their father, and he was killed.

We know not whether the murdered and subsequently (if inadvertently) cannibalized mother's rolling head is the real thing or an apparition. The fact that it *is* the rolling head of the murdered, cannibalized mother is horrifying enough. But our own understanding of the supernatural would lean toward the spiritual explanation, and so we term this a ghost story, here and in many other collections, too, with the caveat that it is so much more than that as well. Just as other native legends, upon examination, turn out to be so much less.

The Scalped Man

According to anthropologist Douglas R. Parks, writing in *Plains Indian Studies* in the 1980s, Arikawa and Pawnee ghost stories often tell of the Scalped Man (*tshunuxu'* in Arikawa, *kicahuruksu'* in Pawnee), a warrior killed and scalped in battle.

It is only upon closer inspection of the traditions that exist behind the stories that we realize the true nature of the ghosts themselves.

Parks explained: "In Plains warfare the practice of scalping an enemy was generally restricted to a dead foe . . . Usually, however, it was the man who lay unconscious on the battlefield, either from a blow on the head or a wound, who was mistaken for dead and was scalped. Since the removal of one's scalp was not necessarily fatal, many such victims later revived and lived. These survivors of scalping were known as scalped men." According to the Arikawa, such a person "is transformed; he is different, [and] no longer human . . . unable to return to his village and his people [and] forever shunning human contact."

In other words, he resorted to the way of life that was believed to be the that of the supernatural scalped man; that is, a solitary dwelling far from other men; nighttime spent creeping unseen and unheard around man's dwellings scavenging for food; a fearful appearance—it is no wonder that the scalped

man was often mistaken for a ghost, for that was the life that he was forced to led.

A story related by author George Amos Dorsey in 1904 tells the tale of an Arikawa hunter who, while out hunting on a hilltop one day, “saw a scalped man kill a deer in the valley below and then disappear with it into the side of a distant hill. The hunter went to the spot where the scalped man had entered, and when he found the door he himself went in.”

> The hunter then learned that long ago the scalped man had been killed in a battle and later he was revived and blessed by Night. Now he traveled at night as a spirit and was able to take scalps, capture horses, and catch eagles without difficulty. He asked the hunter what he sought; and when the scalped man was told that he wished for horses, he said that he would bring the hunter a herd.
>
> The man must, however, remain in the cave while he was gone and later must not reveal his identity or location to anyone. The next morning the scalped man returned with horses for him and said that the man was to give one of the horses to the scalped man’s wife and son after he returned to the village. On numerous occasions thereafter, the man returned to the scalped man’s cave to obtain horses, scalps, and eagles.
>
> He became known among the tribe for his bravery and finally became a chief. Years later, however, when he became ill, he told the people about the scalped man who was responsible for his success. A party then went to the scalped man’s cave, but they found no one there. The scalped man had told the man that were he to divulge his, the scalped man’s, location, he would know; and now the betrayed benefactor had moved to a new dwelling and was never seen again.

Students of European folklore will immediately recognize elements of this story from fairy, leprechaun and other similar traditions—the supernatural being that admits a human to its confidence, but swears that it will disappear should its secret ever be divulged. The essential benevolence of this particular Scalped Man should not, however, be assumed to be shared by pre-Columbian America’s other spectral denizens.

The Wabanaki people of modern Maine, for example, spoke of a female

ghost who lived in the darkest and most dangerous swamps, and who lured children to their deaths with her tears and cries. No child, she knew, could resist the sound of a woman in distress, lost within such a dark and unforgiving environment. It was the easiest thing in the world for her to draw such innocents deep into the swamp where, depending upon the storyteller, she might kill and eat them; or she might simply watch them drown for her own amusement.

Or, most tragic of all, she might call out to children through genuine loneliness, even though she knows that the moment they touch her, they will perish. Either way, a very pertinent warning for children to stay away from swamps.

Yet if ghosts, adhering directly to the definitions with which mainstream superstition likes to describe them, are comparative strangers to Native American mythology and lore, Native Americans themselves are by no means strangers to mainstream superstition. The United States is littered with haunts associated with the spirits of long dead Native Americans.

Some are seemingly attested to throughout history, first recorded in colonial times and still whispered today. Others are drawn from the most recent sources—the Facebook community Native American Ghost Stories, for example, launched in February 2014 and attracted over six hundred members in less than six months, many of whom had their own tale to tell.

Other sources overflow with other legends.

There is the story of Drago, the Native American cattle herder who is said to still walk the Devil's Backbone, a stretch of rocky beauty that runs alongside State Highway 32 in Texas's Hill Country, and a picturesque haunt that he shares with many others—a lost patrol of Confederate soldiers; a weeping woman clutching a child, begging passersby to help her retrieve the corpse of her miner husband; and an array of sounds and shapes to which no particular explanation has ever become attached.

There are the balls of blue and yellow flame that dart through the foothills of Brown Mountain in Morganton, North Carolina, the spirits of Cherokee maidens seeking lovers who perished in a great battle there, perhaps as long ago as the 1200s.

There is the little girl who stands close to Point Iroquois lighthouse in Brimley, Michigan, on the spot where she was savaged and killed by a bear—and, close by, another long ago tribal battlefield, whose fallen reenact their

bloody deaths when the night is dark.

The Ghosts of Great Battles

Of all the sites and scenes that tradition insists are haunted, battlefields are, both naturally and historically, seen as one of the most common sources of ghostly activity. So much death, so much suffering, cannot fail to have left its mark on the landscape, and no matter what your personal "explanation" of a haunting might be, it is very easy to understand why a battlefield should be in need of one.

It is an ancient tradition. According to the second-century geographer and historian Pausanias, the already ancient site of the battle of Marathon was haunted by the sounds of fighting, screaming and both men and horses dying bloodily. But, he cautioned, do not visit the battlefield specifically to see or hear the ghosts, for to do so would be to anger the gods.

Chalmette Battlefield in Louisiana is home to invisible armies replaying the last battle of the War of 1812—peace had already broken out when the fighting began! Spectral cannons fire, voices cry and the dying continue to die forever.

Photo by Dave Thompson

The battlefields around Troy, too, have their spirits. Indeed, the third-century author Philostratus's *Heroica* collects what are believed to be the region's own ghostly traditions, as related by a vine-dresser whose own life, he avers, is under the protection of the Homeric hero Protesilaus. His neighbors can all boast similar patrons, and they, too, are long accustomed to hearing the sounds of ancient battle crashing from the fields around their village.

According to the Roman historian Tacitus, spectral armies were seen fighting in the skies above the city of Jerusalem, as the emperor Titus lay siege to it; and centuries later, when it was Rome's turn to be under assault, from the hordes of Attila the Hun, the human battle ended, only to be echoed by a spectral conflict. Another Latin chronicler, Plutarch, told of a stream running alongside a battlefield in Bœotia where the sound of panting horses can be heard above that of the waters.

It is to Plutarch, too, that we owe the story of the ghost that visited Brutus, Julius Caesar's assassin, in his tent on the eve of the battle of Philippi, and who appeared again during the battle. It was William Shakespeare, some 1,400 years later, who determined the ghost to be that of Caesar himself—Plutarch is silent on that subject. But the scene itself is among the most familiar of any ghost story.

Brutus is bemoaning the flickering of a taper when he senses somebody—or some *thing*—approach.

> Ha! who comes here?
> I think it is the weakness of mine eyes
> That shapes this monstrous apparition.
> It comes upon me. Art thou any thing?
> Art thou some god, some angel, or some devil,
> That mak'st my blood cold, and my hair to stare?
> Speak to me what thou art!

The ghost, oddly, has no real reason for appearing, beyond to warn Brutus that he will see it again during the battle—a redundancy that Brutus himself is not slow to comment upon.

> Why, I will see thee at Philippi, then.

Now I have taken heart, thou vanishest:
Ill spirit, I would hold more talk with thee.

But, of course, the “ill spirit” had already disappeared.

If the battlefields of classical literature are haunted, then it only follows that those of more recent times should be likewise infested. Warbonnet Creek in Harrison, Nebraska, and Fallen Timbers in Maumee, Ohio, have their fair share of spirits, as do Cooch’s Bridge in Delaware and Brandywine in Pennsylvania; while the memory of battlefields, too, can linger. In New Orleans, the former home of the great General Pierre Gustav Toutant Beauregard, the Beauregard-Keyes House, is said to be the nocturnal scene of a battle as bloody and destructive as any of those fought through the Civil War—which started, lest we forget, with Beauregard’s own order to open fire on Fort Sumter.

His entire home, it is said, explodes in violence, gore and terror, the walls and furnishings melting into chaos and carnage—the lasting legacy, it is said, of the guilt and horror that the general suffered in the years after the war’s conclusion.

The walls and furnishings of the Beauregard-Keyes House in New Orleans are said to be the nocturnal setting for an eternal battle as bloody and destructive as any of those fought during the Civil War.

Photo by Dave Thompson

Battlegrounds Where the Fighting Never Ends

Visit the Pea Ridge National Military Park in **Garfield, Arkansas**, after dark, and the sound of musket fire echoes through the night, as two armies' worth of apparitions continue to contest the Battle of Pea Ridge.

The Civil War Museum at Carter House in **Franklin, Tennessee**, is a survivor of one of the worst battles of the entire conflict, a Union command post in the very center of the battlefield. It is haunted, however, by Todd and Annie Carter, two members of the family who were forced to shelter in their own basement while troops waged war from their living room.

The grounds of Russ House in **Marianna, Florida**, mark the site of the Battle of Marianna, fought in 1864 and still patrolled by the spirits of the soldiers who died there. Other non-survivors of the same battle walk Ely Corner, nearby. Neither are they alone. The house's own architect, Joseph W. Russ Jr., committed suicide when the Great Depression struck. He still visits the house that bears his name, riding the elevator to the upper stories and then gazing down the stairs.

In **Kennesaw, Georgia**, the Battle of Kennesaw Mountain continues to be fought with gunshot and cannon fire. Presumably unconnected with the battle, but alarming regardless, are the reports of the spectral deer that also dwell here, who will charge toward the witness and then disappear just before they make contact.

Headless soldiers march through the fog that falls over the Civil War Droop Mountain Battlefield State Park in **Pocahontas County, West Virginia**.

Ball's Bluff Battlefield Regional Park and National Cemetery in **Leesburg, Virginia**, crams both an 1861 Civil War battlefield and a burial ground into its 223-acre expanse—the latter, with its fifty-four war graves, the third-smallest US national cemetery. Union and Confederate spirits alike walk the battleground.

The Deason family home in **Ellisville, Mississippi**, was, for many years, the site of a dark, irremovable stain, the lifeblood of a military policeman cut down on the front porch of the house by one of the Civil War deserters he was seeking. Finally the owners of the house replaced the flooring and the stain went away. To be replaced by the man's ghost.

Gunshots and screams, cries for help and desperate moaning are all on the

aural menu if you spend a night at the Chickamauga Battlefield in **Chickamauga, Georgia**, while lanterns flicker and the figure of a woman in a wedding dress drifts disconsolate, still searching for her lost soldier love. Most terrifying of all, however, is Old Green Eyes, a hairy razor-toothed creature whose origins—and intentions—are unknown.

Spook Hill, on Gapland Road in **Burkittsville, Maryland**, is aptly named. If you put your car in neutral at the foot of the incline, the ghosts of Confederate soldiers, en route to the battle of Antietam, will push it back up the hill, in the belief that it is a cannon or similar piece of ordnance. But that does not explain the laughter that can be heard in the nearby woods.

The great Confederate General William Whitting might have died a prisoner at Fort Columbus, New York, but it was at Fort Fisher, on **Kure Beach, North Carolina**, that he was injured and captured, and it is to there that he returns today, still berating himself for the fort's capture. Other ghosts accompany him, to help him relive that final conflict.

Shiloh National Military Park in **Shiloh, Tennessee**, marks one of the bloodiest battles of the entire Civil War—reason enough for a host of apparitions that range from the dead and dying to the still-fighting soldiers whose gunshots, cries and drums can be heard even when the night is darkest. A pond that turns red with blood marks the spot where so many wounded men and horses breathed their last.

Custer's Last Stand

But no battlefield can lay greater claim to haunted legend and spectral mystery than Little Bighorn, Montana, which is widely described as the most haunted battlefield in the Western world.

It marks the site, after all, of one of the most humiliating defeats the United States Army ever suffered, and it took place on the nation's own soil. Even today, some 140 years after the battle, some 400,000 tourists from all over the world descend annually upon the Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument, to stand on the hill where General Custer's Seventh Cavalry fought their now legendary Last Stand, battling until the combined weight of their Lakota and Cheyenne foe snuffed them out forever.

Over the course of two days' fighting, June 25 and 26, 1876, almost three hundred members of the US Seventh Cavalry were slaughtered. The enemy

lost maybe fifty, perhaps a hundred, men. And the ghosts of both sides still walk the ravines and ridgeways that mark out the Little Bighorn.

The battlefield was designated a national monument back in 1946. As early as 1879, however, it was preserved as a US national cemetery and already it had an uncanny reputation, alive with mysterious lights, sounds and figures.

Native American warriors on horseback were said to ride through the cemetery, perhaps in search of survivors, perhaps simply to end any lives that might still be clinging on to a gruesomely wounded body. Whatever their purpose, the Crow people living nearby referred to the cemetery superintendent as the ghost herder, believing that when he lowered the Stars and Stripes at dusk, that was the sign for the ghosts to rise; and when he raised it the following morning, that returned the spirits to their graves.

Some of the most vivid of the stories we hear today, quite inadvertently, were the responsibility of author Charles Kuhlman, whose 1951 book about Custer and the battle, *Legend into History*, is the foundation for much of the mythology surrounding Little Bighorn.

Generally discounted as a workable history today, *Legend into History* is nevertheless a gripping, vivid work—so vivid, in fact, that according to writer Bob Reece at the website www.friendslittlebighorn.com, "It has been reported that Custer's spirit visited him. It has also been reported that Kuhlman would visit Last Stand Hill, alone, in hopes of making some form of contact with the other world. . . . It could explain Kuhlman's fantastic interpretation of the battle."

The stories that have grown up around the battlefield are as varied as the storytellers themselves. Among the most popular, however, is the so-called time slip.

Every great collection of ghost stories, true and false, includes a time slip—an utterly inexplicable sequence of events in which a person, or even a group of people, suddenly find themselves experiencing events that they could not possibly be witnessing, because they took place years before.

The most simple version, and the most familiar, is the one in which a traveler stumbles upon a wayside inn on a dark night, rests there without suspicion or event, and then resumes his journey, only to discover later that the inn had been destroyed long before. That marvelous little movie *The Halfway House*, made in 1944, retells such a happenstance.

Other famous time slips include the unscheduled visit paid to the Palace of

Versailles, circa 1792, by the principal and vice-principal of St. Hugh's College, Oxford. . . . in August 1901; the apparent re-creation of the attack on Pearl Harbor experienced by a party of tourists in Hawaii in the mid-1980s; and a thrilling escape from the Great Fire of Seattle, undertaken by two visitors to the city's underground doppelgänger more than a century after the blaze.

Tales such as these stand or fall on a variety of platforms, of which the convictions of the story's teller(s) are only the most basic. Independent verification of the facts, and the incorporation of details with which the teller could not possibly have been familiar, are both crucial to the story's hopes of passing from the realms of "you must have dreamed it" into something more tangible.

Little Bighorn has provided those details.

Without having actually experienced one, few of us today can truly visualize the sheer nightmarish hell of a genuine battlefield, and fewer still can imagine one from a century or more ago. The weapons, the uniforms, the tactics and so on might all be familiar from history books, movies and sundry other recreations. But the sounds and the stench could only be described by one who was there.

So nobody really knew what to make of the French tourist who arrived back at the Little Bighorn visitors' center in a state that witnesses could only describe as hysteria, with what appeared to be fresh blood on his clothing . . . fresh blood that was already fading, and would soon disappear altogether; with vicious slashes to his backpack, which would also vanish within minutes; and a confused tale of having been ambushed, alongside three men in gray, by a band of Native Americans who slowly and laughingly disemboweled his shrieking, terrified companions.

Perhaps monsieur had fallen asleep in the autumnal Montana sun and simply dreamed the attack. That is the skeptic's usual explanation, after all. But that would mean that all the people he spoke to must have hallucinated the blood on his clothes and the rips in his possessions; and besides, it also raises another question that is no less simple to answer. Assuming that it *was* a dream, what is it about the world's manifold haunted places that encourages people to just lie down and take a deep, dream-filled nap at any time of day? Because he is not the only witness who has been accused of doing that, at Little Bighorn and elsewhere.

The blood-soaked battlefield itself is not alone in being haunted. The Stone House is a two-story building that was erected in 1894, originally to serve as both a residence for the cemetery's superintendent and as a funeral parlor—bodies awaiting burial in the cemetery often overnighted on the ground floor of the Stone House before the ceremony the following day. Later still, the building became the summer residence for the park staff, and today it hosts White Swan Memorial Library, the park historian's office and conference rooms.

And throughout all of these usages, the building has been plagued by lights that switch themselves on and off at will; by doors that will be mysteriously locked and then, just as mysteriously, unlocked; by footsteps upstairs when there is nobody there, and the unknown woman who descends the stairs and then disappears.

The figure of a grievously wounded soldier has been seen in the upstairs rooms; closed doors will shake as though somebody is trying the handle; people have even heard the sound of kettles boiling and food being prepared. And that is just in the Stone House. There is more activity to be experienced at the visitors' center at the foot of Last Stand Hill, and more, of course, in the cemetery itself.

The warriors who charge through the grounds, their horses leaping the gravestones or just passing straight through them. The cavalrymen who use those same grave markers to shelter behind as they fire back at the attackers; or who clutch the cold stone with dying fingers as they tumble back wounded by bullet, spear or tomahawk. The mysterious figures that stand sentinel still, staring into the darkness; the lights that dance and cavort around them, as though fulfilling a mission of their very own.

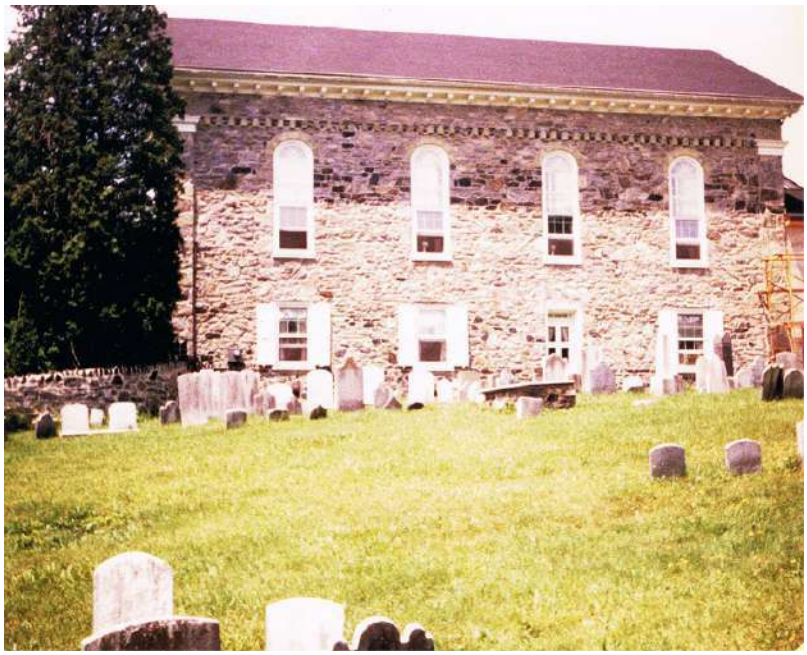
Historically, Little Bighorn marked the last major engagement of the Indian Wars. Supernaturally, it is still taking place.

The Singing Waters

Perhaps the most chilling of all America's Native haunts, however, and certainly among the mysterious, is that point on the Pascagoula River, close by Gautier, Mississippi, where the waters literally sing. And their words are the final song of the Pascagoula Indians.

The story dates from who knows when. It is certainly as old as any of our

written accounts of that stretch of the Mississippi River, a place where the waters initially appear to be crashing alone. But, if you listen carefully, for long enough, slowly, gently, almost imperceptibly, another sound rises within them, a buzzing . . . a humming . . . a chanting. A chanting that grows louder and louder until, without warning, it stops.



On September 11, 1777, some 2,000 men died in the battle of Brandywine, Pennsylvania, described as the single bloodiest day of the entire Revolutionary War. The result is one of the single most haunted sites in America. Pictured here is the Brandywine Baptist Church and its cemetery.

Photo by Dave Thompson

Our own histories first mention the Pascagoula Indians in 1699—it was in that year that the French explorer Pierre Le Moyne d'Iberville encountered the tribe, and wrote with astonishment of the sheer beauty of their women. In the years and, indeed, centuries that followed, the Pascagoula remained in full view of the ever-encroaching Europeans, with tribal histories recording their movements around the Mississippi until as late as 1822.

At which point, it is generally assumed that the tribe either amalgamated with the Biloxi, alongside whom they had always lived, or simply died out. There is no place in the modern history books for the story of Anola, the Biloxi princess, who fell in love with Altama, the chief of the Pascagoula. And because we can be fairly well assured that a mass suicide would have caught somebody's attention in the 1820s (not to mention a full-fledged

Indian war), we can only assume that this took place long, long before. Before the writers, before Le Moyne d'Iberville, before the river learned to sing.

The couple's love was doomed. Anola had long since been betrothed to a chieftain within her own tribe, and nothing could break that compact. But the lovers would not be thwarted; Anola fled to live with Altama—and the full wrath of the Biloxi tribe descended upon them. "Return her to us," demanded the Biloxi as their warriors massed for war, and there was never any doubt that should war break out, the Biloxi, many times the size of the Pascagoula, would prevail.

But Altama's people would not surrender their beloved chief and his princess to the Biloxi, not even after the very first battle saw the Pascagoula soundly defeated, savagely outnumbered, and the women and children rounded up to be taken into slavery.

That was the fate that awaited them as they gathered on the riverbank one fateful morning, the two lovers still protected at the very heart of the crowd. Around them, the Biloxi gathered to witness their foe's ultimate humiliation.

Instead, they witnessed it triumph, as the entire crowd joined hands and, chanting a song of death, began to slowly advance into the river.

They were still chanting as the waters closed over their heads.

The Singing River had found its voice.

4

The Ghostly Gazetteer: California to Colorado

A Bewildering Bagful of Belligerent Beasties

Galster Park in **West Covina, California**, is said to be haunted by the sound of the pleading, sobbing victims of some long ago child rapist and murderer. Less frequently, but even more heartbreaking, are the occasional appearances of those same victims.

Until its ceiling collapsed in 1964, the Bastille on North Doughty Road in **Hanford, California**, was the aptly named town jail. Since then it has served lighter purposes, being taken over for restaurants and nightclubs. But its former denizens did not leave when the cells were removed, and kitchens and cloakrooms can prove very noisy places late at night.

Rising gloriously above **Ione, California**, a triumph of Romanesque Revivalism, the Preston School of Industry . . . or Preston Castle, as the locals know it . . . was founded in 1894 as a reform school. And some of its former residents, apparently, believe they should still be incarcerated there. So, one imagines, does the spirit of Anna Corbin, a housekeeper who was bludgeoned to death in the building during the 1950s.

Who is the Black Lady who is said to haunt the balcony of the Olivas Adobe, on Olivas Park Drive in **Bakersfield, California**? Nobody seems to know, but watch for her as you drive by.

Scary portraits, whose eyes follow you around the room, are very much the province of English stately homes and castles. But don’t tell that to the

original caretaker of the old (1897) Woelke-Stoffel House on North West Street in **Anaheim, California**. The eyes in his portrait are as watchful today as his own ever were, back when he lived.

Take care as you drive down Brea Canyon Road, a winding two-lane highway in **Diamond Bar, California**, that has taken more than its fair share of lives in traffic accidents over the years. Small wonder, then, that late-night drivers claim to see so many hitchhikers there. . . . Hitchhikers, of course, who *aren't* there.

Not content with one White Lady, like most hauntings have to be, the Black Diamond Mines on Somersville Road, in **Antioch, California**, boasts two! One is the spirit of one Sarah Norton, who was hit and killed here by a carriage; the other is the so-called White Witch, a woman who was executed for witchcraft on the same site, after a group of children she was caring for fell ill and died.

The ghost town of Bodie, California, has been deserted since the 1950s, the culmination of a decline that began in the 1880s. Most buildings here can claim a ghost, but perhaps the best known are those who implement the so-called Curse of Bodie—according to which, anyone who removes anything, large or small, from the site will endure nothing but bad luck until it is returned.

Photo by Jon Sullivan/PDPhoto.org/Wikimedia Commons

A young girl who drowned in the Water Cove feature is said to be the spirit that haunts Raging Waters water park in **San Dimas, California**. Sometimes,

too, she calls for help. But is it her, too, who will speak visitors' names aloud in the food court? Or whose telephone rings late at night when the park is supposedly empty?

Off CA 153 in **Coloma, California**, Marshall's Monument stands in honor of John Marshall, the man whose discovery of two nuggets of gold in the watermill at his partner John Sutter's logging mill on June 24, 1848. But is Marshall's the shadowy figure that has been seen around the monument? Or is it just one of the thousands of hopeful would-be prospectors who flocked to California in the gold rush that followed?

If Buffalo Bill, the old legend of the west, was going to haunt any place, his own grave in Golden, Colorado, would seem a good place to begin.

Photo by Dave Thompson

In **Aspen, Colorado**, the Hotel Jerome on East Main Street is a onetime morgue and the home to the legendary Prohibition-era Aspen Crud drink. Today, it also boasts the spirits of a drowned boy, a lovelorn silver broker, a bullied maid and, for no reason at all, a spectral sink full of soapy water. Nearby, the Little Red Ski Lodge, reputed to be the town's oldest extant

lodge, has long been reputed to be haunted.

Another of **Aspen**'s oldest homes is the dwelling place of another of its oldest ghosts. Harriet Webber was the wife of the builder who gave his name to the West Bleeker Street mansion, the Webber House, and in 1881 she died of accidental strychnine poisoning. Interestingly, the home she haunts was not built until 1885.

Third Bridge in **Bennett, Colorado**, it is said, was erected on the site of a Native American massacre, and the spirits of the slain still suffer their death pains here today. They are joined in their haunt by the carload of students who also perished here in a long-ago accident, and who now try to lure other drivers off the road, to join their ghostly gang.

In **Colorado Springs, Colorado**, the Hearthstone Inn was constructed from two adjoining Victorian homes—whose former residents apparently included the little girl who still loves to run around laughing and throwing things toward the modern guests. Nearby, the city's Helen Hunt Falls is said to be as haunted as it is beautiful. Named for the poet Helen Maria Hunt Jackson (1830–1885), a pioneering vocal supporter of Native American rights, the Falls have claimed many lives over the years . . . and the spirits of their drowned victims are still at large today.

Back in the 1950s, an enraged government employee allegedly murdered his manager in what is now

the Colorado Springs Pioneer Museum. The spirit of the unhappy manager still walks his former office and department.

Photo by Dave Thompson

A mysterious figure in an old-style policeman's cloak is frequently seen by diners at the Press Club in **Denver, Colorado**, although it's unclear whether he is also responsible for rearranging the silverware after the tables have been laid or for walking loudly across the second floor when nobody else is up there.

When people describe Leadville, Colorado (seen here on a postcard), as a ghost town, they don't mean it's deserted. They mean it's full of ghosts.

Author's collection

The Beaumont Hotel in **Ouray, Colorado**, was still fairly new (it was built in 1886) when a woman was murdered here by her husband. And every quarter of the moon, at 2:15 a.m., she sets out in search of her killer. She never finds him, though, and when the anniversary of her death rolls around every year, again she is alone—even as she acts out the scene of her own demise.

5

Not Dead, but Definitely Buried

America's Most Haunted Cemeteries

Dayton, O., March 25.—A thousand people surround the grave yard in Miamisburg, a town near here, every night to witness the antics of what appears to be a genuine ghost. There is no doubt about the existence of the apparition, as Mayor Marshall, the revenue collector and hundreds of prominent citizens all testify to having seen it. Last night several hundred people, armed with clubs and guns, assaulted the specter, which appeared to be a woman in white. Clubs, bullets and shot tore the air in which the mystic figure floated without disconcerting it in the least. A portion of the town turned out en masse to-day and began exhuming all the bodies in the cemetery.

The remains of the Buss family, composed of three people, have already been exhumed. The town is visited daily by hundreds of strangers and none are disappointed, as the apparition is always on duty promptly at 9 o'clock. The strange figure was at once recognized by the inhabitants of the town as a young lady supposed to have been murdered several years ago. Her attitude while drifting among the graves is one of deep thought, with the head inclined forward and hands clasped behind.

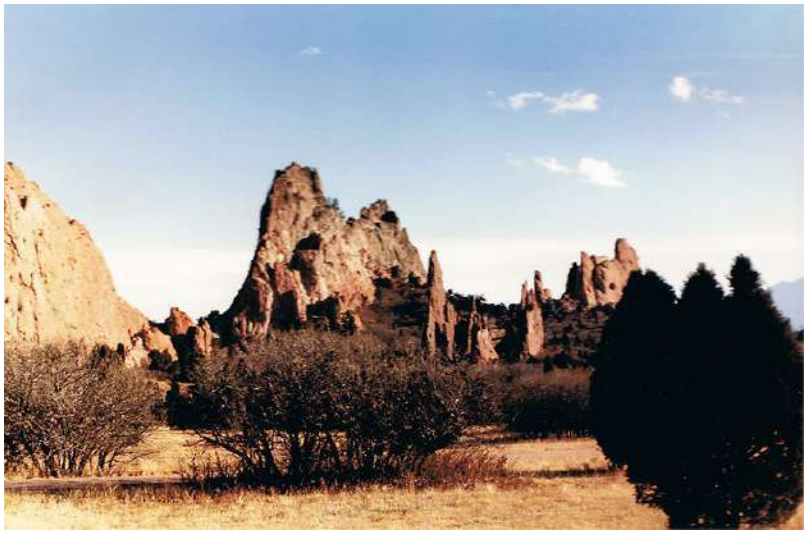
—*Philadelphia Press*, March 25, 1884

The first European ghosts arrived in America aboard the first European vessels to sail here. Sailors are notoriously superstitious, and those washing up for the first time on the shores of a land that no man (no white man, anyway) had ever set eyes upon before would scarcely have found their fears and trepidations assuaged by the strangeness of this new world.

The first stories they heard, though, and the first legends they wove, would have been drawn from their own imagination. There was nobody else to

explain away the mysterious sights and sounds of a hostile land, and its mysterious people; no translators aboard the first invading galleons who could go ashore, have a quick chat, and then return with the lay of the land in their palm.

So European minds conjured European horrors, layering them over this strange new landscape, inserting them in between the slivers of understanding that did dawn as the two cultures came to know one another, to form a whole new plateau of supernatural terror with which to torment its own nights.



Be careful when you visit the old Indian burial ground at Garden of the Gods in Colorado Springs. Cars will mysteriously break down, and some have even been discovered abandoned, with no trace of their owners.

Photo by Dave Thompson

The ultimate fusion of Native and European superstition is the desecrated Indian burial ground, a topic that twentieth- (and beyond) century culture has taken to both the most nightmarish extremes via *The Amityville Horror* franchise of books and movies, and the most absurd lengths, via *South Park*'s "Spooky Fish" episode.

In both, the construction of a modern building on an unnecessarily desecrated ancient cemetery is not simply *accepted* as reason enough for a violent haunting, it is not even questioned. The notion that the careless redevelopment of a burial ground will unleash a world of hurt upon whoever lives there next is, simply, one of nature's most concrete equations.

That said, as actor James Brolin considered taking the lead role in the 1979 movie of the Amityville story, it was neither the story nor its cause that

decided him. It was, he later revealed, the sound of his pants falling from where he had hung them and onto the floor, startling him as he read Jay Anson's book about the haunting. What horrors can a few restless native bogeymen hold in store, that a pair of spectral trousers cannot beat hands down?

From Hell to Amityville

Centered around a 1920s Dutch Colonial at 112 Ocean Avenue, Amityville, Long Island, *The Amityville Horror* is probably America's best-known true-life haunting, although the ghostly activity was in many ways only the house's secondary attraction. Its true notoriety devolved from it being the scene, on November 13 (a Friday), 1974, of one of the bloodiest murders of the age, as twenty-four-year-old Ronald DeFeo Jr. arose at three a.m. to ruthlessly slaughter his parents and his four siblings.

According to the prosecution, it was an open-and-shut case. DeFeo was an alleged heroin addict, and he committed the murders while in the process of burglarizing the house to raise money for his habit. According to the defense, however, the killings were not his responsibility. It was the spirits that already haunted the house that made him do it.

The Amityville house first came to attention during 1977, with the first in a string of lurid media reports. According to the *New York Post* for December 18 that year, "terror gripped George Lutz of Long Island at the most horrific sight that ever confronted a husband. The woman on their bed had been his attractive blond wife, Kathy. Now, suddenly, she had been turned into an ugly, unkempt hag."

No, the report continued, "this is no ghost story for Christmas, but just one episode in the life of the Lutzes, an ordinary family living in a big, six-roomed modern house . . . in the quiet town of Amityville. . . . Their account of twenty-eight days of terror in the house haunted by violent and malicious demons has gripped the nation."

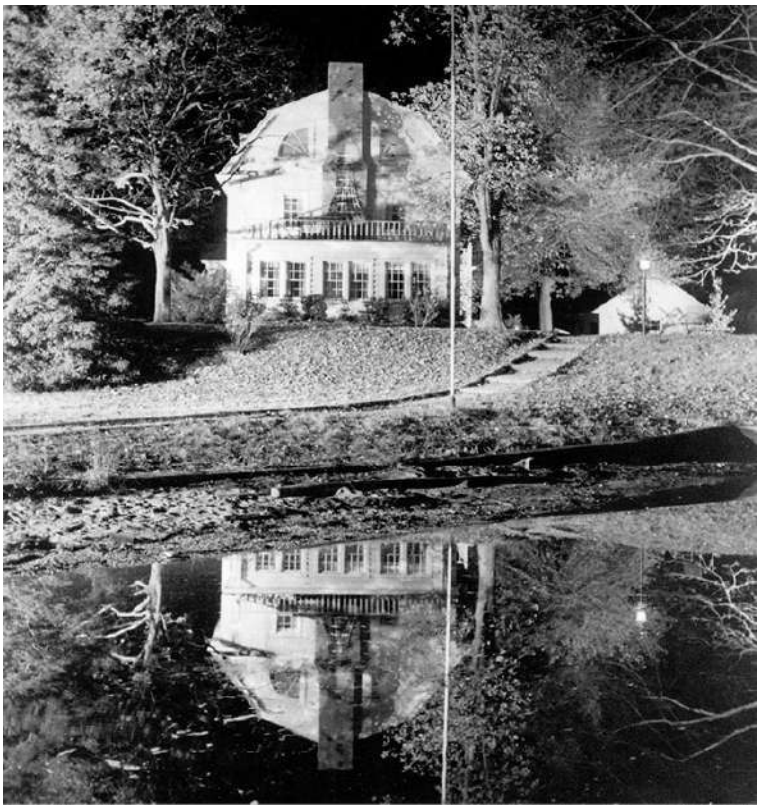
In other words, "If you thought *The Exorcist* was terrifying . . ."

It was psychic Ethel Johnson Meyers, visiting the Amityville house with ghost hunter Hans Holzer in 1977, who first suggested a desecrated burial ground as the source of whatever supernatural energies possessed the house. Prior to her visit, in fact, nobody had even known there was a burial ground

there.

Apparently, however, there was, and something had disturbed its occupants so violently that their malign influence not only led to the DeFeo massacre, but was also still at large a year later, when a new family, George and Kathy Lutz and their five-year-old daughter, moved in to number 112.

Author Jay Anson's book, and the movie that followed, were largely concerned with the Lutzes' experiences—and, as seventies-style supernatural shockers go, both told their story well. More than that, however, they were believable. Because, again, across so many of the world's cultures, few acts are so taboo as the deliberate (or even accidental) desecration of a cemetery.



Still one of the most beautifully realized horror movies ever made, *The Amityville Horror* (1979) offers a few more good reasons not to build on old burial grounds.

American International/Photofest

Whether for fear of disturbing some supernatural horror, or simply out of respect for the sleeping bones, even today's most rapacious developers and planners will usually ensure that at least a modicum of care is taken on those occasions that a historic burial ground gets in the way of whatever nonsensical ego trip they consider a symbol of progress.

Not always, though, and that is what permits the more populist Internet news sites to huffily post the latest urban mythology, usually disguised as a guessing game of some sort (for that seems to be how all news is disseminated these days).

"Mortified mom discovers toddler's morbid plaything—you won't believe what Tommy, two, dug up in his yard."

Take the bait, negotiate the ads, click off all the special offers and "you have won" diversions, and it'll turn out that the house was built on a long forgotten private cemetery, and yes, those may have been human bones that the dog was crunching last night.

But, as a rule, developers do try to avoid such ghoulish faux pas, and cities themselves often go out of their way to preserve the relics of their historical dead, to the extent where almost every major city in the United States (and many smaller ones too) can point to an ancient downtown church that has withstood every deprecation that the modern age has thrown its way; that has stood firm no matter what redevelopment and rebuilding might be taking place around it.

Few first-time visitors to lower Manhattan, for example, have ever failed to be amazed to discover St. Paul's Chapel at 209 Broadway. Completed in 1766, it is a survivor not only of disaster . . . the Great Fire of 1776, the draft riots of 1863, 9/11 . . . but also of the seemingly endless development and redevelopment of its immediate skyscraping surroundings.

And yes, it has a ghost, the English actor and eccentric alcoholic George Frederick Cook. He died in New York in September 1811, penniless and, it is said, headless.

Apparently, he was so hard up at the end that he pledged his head to medical science, in order to pay his doctor's bills. It's unclear whether, as has also been alleged, his skull eventually found its way to a local theater, where it became a favorite prop during productions of *Hamlet*; or whether the members of a private New York club (whose membership included Daniel Webster) truly subjected the skull to phrenological examination. But old G. F.'s spirit still walks St. Paul's cemetery and, you will probably rejoice to learn, it is headless.

Watch out for the traffic, George. Oops.

The Old North Church in Boston, Mother Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia . . . again, most every city boasts a similar

gallant survivor, a reminder that no matter how brash Babylon may become, some things remain sacred still. And who knows what horrors might be unleashed were that ever to change?

A Cemetery Full of Specters

The residents of Whittier, California, can answer that question. A ghostly fog still shrouds Dead Man's Park, an Old Quaker cemetery that was swept away long ago. But though the headstones were removed (and, it is said, junked), the buried remain below the soil with just a marker to remember them. The dead, it is said, are still angry about that.

But even if they weren't, the knowledge of what the park once was might be enough to conjure fears in certain people. Whether in use or abandoned, cemeteries are spooky, and that is one of the most elemental truisms of ghost hunting. Most haunted places that one visits, among the very questions that are asked is "Why is this place haunted?" And then you visit a cemetery, a graveyard, a burial ground, a tomb, a plague pit . . . any place where the living have historically transported their dead for disposal . . . and there, the question would be "Why *isn't* it haunted?" Without any encouragement whatsoever, such places possess an atmosphere that is unlike any other, and whether or not that atmosphere is the product of the visitor's own imagination is irrelevant. If sufficient people get a similar feeling, then the die is cast.

Nor can we rely upon religion to protect us from whatever might be out there. For reasons that do not appear to have been satisfactorily explained by anybody with any authority in the matter, a graveyard may be consecrated ground, just as the church or chapel that adjoins it is consecrated. But that is no protection against evil. The sanctity of holy ground is not, apparently, applied to its permanent residents, and so it is to our utmost relief that the majority of our most active cemetery residents appear to be of a benevolent nature.

And that includes the Catman, the mysteriously feline-featured creature that walks Long Cemetery in Frankford, Delaware, but who is actually just a former caretaker, still protecting his charge from partying teenagers. And the Hookman, caretaker at Great Hill Cemetery in Seymour, Connecticut, who did indeed have a hook for a hand. A hook that he now scrapes across the

roof of any courting couple's car that might be parked around his domain late at night.

There are so many of them. Old Arthur Johnson, tending his own gravesite at the town cemetery in Kenai, Alaska; and the apparently unrelated children, a little girl in a white dress from the 1900s and a boy in a 1930s outfit, who walk the Birch Hill grounds in Fairbanks.

The White Lady who has been seen in the Union Cemetery in Easton, Connecticut, since the 1940s; and the Green Lady at the Seventh Day Baptist Cemetery in Burlington, Connecticut, the ghost of one Elisabeth Palmiter, who drowned in a swamp in 1800 while searching for her snowbound husband . . . whose own spirit has also been seen in the swamp, searching for his wife. The Pink Lady who haunts the graveyard in Yorba Linda, California, appearing every June 15, the anniversary of her prom night death on the town railroad tracks. She was wearing a pink dress at the time.

There are the children who play in St. Paul's Church Cemetery in Key West, Florida, and who apparently sparked up their own antismoking crusade long before such things became popular. Walk through the grounds while enjoying a puff, and you will hear them giggling around you. Keep the cigarette lit and maybe you'll feel them press against your clothing. Persevere till the cigarette has been finished and you might even see them, too.

There are the spirits who assailed George Flower, a farmer in Sand Ridge, close to Vincennes, Indiana, around the turn of the last century. A plot of land that he purchased included what the *Philadelphia Inquirer* referred to as "the oldest cemetery in this section" and, rather indelicately, Flower promptly set about clearing it of the three hundred or so headstones that littered the soil.

Some he threw into the river, the remainder he deployed as the foundations for his new house. An especially distasteful addendum to this act of wanton destruction and disrespect might be the knowledge that Flower's own brother and sister and two of his children were reportedly buried in that same cemetery.

The first sign that anything was amiss came when Flower harvested his first crop and discovered that everything he had planted in the cemetery plot had been devoured by some unknown pestilence. But then the disruption, and attendant disturbances, moved into his house itself, an eruption of supernatural wrath so violent that Flower, his wife and two surviving children had no choice but to abandon their home.

Yet even that may not have been sufficient. According to the newspaper (which was clearly loving the chance to report such a story), “the Flower family, it is feared, will go insane with fear. The neighbors dare not harbor them. Today, lightning struck the barn and burned the stock and buildings. . . .”

What happened next? Infuriatingly, we do not know. Maybe the haunting just ended. Maybe (and more likely), the newspaper simply lost interest. In terms of the fourth estate, the late nineteenth century was the heyday for the weird and inexplicable; a mysterious fish fall, or a rash of three-headed cattle, might easily have forced the unfortunate Flowers clan from even a back page.

We have no shortage of similar tales and equally captivating hauntings, however. There is Elizabeth, just thirteen or fourteen years old when she fell victim to the yellow fever epidemic that struck St. Augustine, Florida, in 1821, and whose body is said to have been left, unburied, at the cemetery gates. There is the restless horde that rises furiously up in Denver’s Cheesman Park, to protest the long ago caretaker who took no care of the cemetery at all and allowed all the incoming bodies to simply be dumped into an unkempt mass grave.

There are the screams that have rung out across the town graveyard in Monette, Arkansas, ever since the authorities chose to obscure with paint and concrete the decaying corpse that lay within an unmarked glass mausoleum.

The weeping woman who wails around Agua Mansa Pioneer Cemetery in Colton, California, searching for her six children—all of whom she drowned, long ago; and in Adelaida Cemetery in Paso Robles, California, another bereft mother, the minister’s nineteen-year-old wife, Charlotte Sitton. She committed suicide in December 1890, following the death, from diphtheria, of the couple’s infant son, but now returns to tend his grave and ensure there are always fresh flowers upon it.

A baby screams in the night at Avon Cemetery in De Queen, Arkansas, and you can hear its mother running for help—but always she is too late. She sat her baby on the edge of the well that still lurks in the center of the cemetery, and the unfortunate mite tumbled into the darkness. Mother and child are doomed to replay that awful moment for eternity.

In some cemeteries, the very memorials pulse with life. Until it was removed in 1967, Druid Ridge Cemetery in Pikeville, Maryland, was very much haunted by the statue of a small black angel, placed upon the tomb of

the 1920s newspaper magnate General Felix Angus.

"Black Aggie," as the statue was known, would commence her nightly deprecations as the last chime of midnight rang over the cemetery. Her eyes would begin to glow, and as they did so, every other ghost in the cemetery would gather around her. Any person who passed beneath Aggie's gaze would be struck blind. Any pregnant woman who walked in her shadow would suffer a miscarriage. One night in 1962, a local student is said to have stolen one of Aggie's arms for a dare. Days later, his body was discovered sprawled beside the general's tombstone, its eyes wide and staring. The medical examiner determined that the youth had died of fright.

The Dalton gang continue fighting their final gun battle, on October 5, 1892, in the Elmwood Cemetery of Coffeyville, Kansas; and Aspenvale Cemetery, in Marion, Virginia, still rings to the voice of Revolutionary War general William Campbell, issuing orders for the upcoming battle of Kings Mountain. And there's a curious patch in Denison, Texas, which is doubly haunted—by the nineteenth-century railroad men who lost limbs in the manifold accidents that plagued their industry in the day; and by the amputated limbs themselves.

According to an 1891 story in the *Dallas Morning News*, the Denison burial ground, close by the Missouri, Kansas and Texas freight depot, was intended wholly for "the internment of hands, legs, fingers and such other arts of human beings as are mashed and mutilated by the cars in such a manner as necessitates amputation."

The limbs' owners, presumably, would survive the operation and go on to live and die elsewhere. But when death did finally embrace them, what should be more natural than that they should hightail it back down to Denison, so that they might meet their maker in their entire form?

Denison is not the only place in America where body-less limbs still walk, crawl, shuffle or, in true Cousin Itt fashion, scramble across the soil. The Revolutionary War–era Fort Mackinac, on Mackinac Island, Michigan, is riddled with hauntings, but the most gruesome are surely the freshly amputated limbs that regularly appear around the hospital. And Mount Saint Mary's college in Emmitsburg, Maryland, is allegedly bothered by a severed hand, once the property of a slave who was accused of, and punished for, theft. Apparently the hand spends its time crawling up walls, looking for imprudently opened windows.

The Heartless Horrors of Hart Island

In terms of legend and renown, few of America's burial places are so highly regarded as Hart Island, a mile-long strip of land at the western end of the Long Island Sound, and known far and wide as the Island of the Dead.

For good reason! The property of the New York State Department of Corrections, whose fiercely guarded private property the burial ground is, Hart Island was first used as a burial ground during the last months of the American Civil War. Some 3,413 captured Confederate soldiers were imprisoned there for four months in 1865, of whom 235 died and were buried in situ.

The war over and the prisoners released, the island then became a quarantine station during the yellow fever outbreak of 1870, after which a women's insane asylum was built in 1885. This in turn became a reformatory for delinquent boys, while there was also a short-lived tubercularium established on the island. The Department of Corrections has several times used it as a prison, and when the US Navy took the island over during World War Two, they—perhaps inevitably!—established a disciplinary barracks there. At one point, there were 2,800 servicemen held there.

Has any piece of land in all of America ever contained so much suffering, from so many different sources? Hardened criminals, dying consumptives, screaming lunatics, fever-whipped children, drug addicts (a rehab center has also passed through the island), all have called Hart Island home—and all have shared it with the dead, many of them dumped in mass graves, which, according to one recent estimate, contain upward of 850,000 bodies.

Paupers, the homeless, the unclaimed, the unnamed, orphans, alcoholics . . . for many years, even decades, if you died on the streets of New York City, and nobody arrived to claim your corpse, you'd be loaded aboard a boat and floated out to the potter's field on Hart Island, to await the Rikers Island inmates whose duty it is to dig the trenches and cast the corpses into them.

The majority of ghost stories that adhere to Hart Island are the worst kind of hearsay, the "friend of a friend of a friend" type tales that are the natural consequence of the island itself being so tightly marshaled. Nigh on impossible to approach without being detected, it is off limits to all but relatives of those who might be buried there, and even their access is tightly

controlled and restricted. There was, back in 2000, a single visit arranged for people to visit the Cold War–era missile silos that still stand on the island, but that is about all they were allowed to see.

Those friends of a friend of a friend, though, have seen some remarkable sights. The still-screaming occupants of the lunatic asylum, so secluded from society that the staff apparently operated without any morals or scruples whatsoever. The battered frames of the TB victims, coughing on the foreshore.

Past jailbirds attempting to escape the island, but drowning in the icy waters that are a higher wall, and more secure gate, than any landlocked prison could ever boast. Alcatraz, on the other side of the country, is often described as America's most impressively escape-proof prison, and maybe it was. But no penitentiary could have stricken its inmates with more hopelessness and despair than the sight of Hart Island rising up out of the waters.

Marie Laveau and the Ghosts of New Orleans

If Hart Island offers the armchair ghost hunter the country's bleakest and most desolate cemetery, Louisiana offers up the most picturesque, beautiful and, above all, atmospheric.

With much of the state perched so far below sea level that it would be impossible to bury the dead in a conventional fashion, Louisiana cemeteries haunt because the dead are not buried below ground, but above it. And so death looms rather than lurks, and the corpses around you lie not beneath your feet, poised to reach up through the soil to grab at your ankles, but at your elbow or shoulder, just a sudden skeletal lunge away from your throat.

The dead of Louisiana have a bead on life that no other boneyard in the country could match.

Telling it for the tourists, a Tallulah tour guide added some extra local flavor to the brew, through the voodoo traditions of Baron Samedi, a master linguist, a mighty warrior, and the personal messenger of human destiny. In ritual, Samedi is the first being whom you call, and the last to whom you bid farewell, for it is Samedi who gives, or denies, the seeker permission to speak with the gods. He also lives in graveyards, eternally poised between this world and the next.

A long-ago stabbing murder is still replayed, every year during Mardi Gras, on the street outside Gallier Hall, New Orleans.

Photo by Dave Thompson

"Samedi is a corruption of Semetye," explains the tour guide, himself wrapped up in full Samedi drag—black tuxedo, white top hat, night-dark glasses, silver-topped cane. "Which is what the folk round here call a cemetery. Every cemetery has its Baron, usually the first man who was buried there when the place was first dug, and the first woman is its Brijit, from Semetye's wife, Madam Brijit. And if you want to call him, you go to the cross that stands at that grave, and that's another of his names, Baron LeCroix. But you need a good reason if you're going to do that, because Samedi doesn't just come out for fun. Not for anything you'd consider fun, anyway."

Voodoo permeates what is assuredly New Orleans's best-known haunted cemetery. Number One—as its name suggests—is the city's oldest, opening in 1789 to replace St. Peter Cemetery, which burned down the year before. Here lies Marie Laveau, the famous voodoo priestess, and if there's a voodoo legend to be told in Louisiana, Marie Laveau is usually behind it. Not because she *was* behind it, but because she's the only voodoo queen whom the tour guides and the storytellers know that the legend-hungry out-of-towners might have heard of.

Marie died quietly at the age of eighty-seven and was buried with full Catholic ceremony in Cemetery Number One. There, though the tourists still come to mark an *X* on her grave, in the hope that she will rise up and come to their aid, it's equally feasible that she rests in perfect peace. For, although she may have been a healer, she was also a hairdresser. Though she may have been a witch, she was also a devout Catholic. And, though her name is synonymous with voodoo magic, she was also a very good listener. Women would come to have their hair cut, and they would chatter while she worked, about themselves, about their friends and enemies, neighbors and who knew whom else? Marie simply took what she learned and used it well.

Marie Laveau was born in New Orleans in 1794, one of the first children of the Haitian diaspora. Her father was a wealthy French-born plantation owner who fled the island with his family at the very outset of the revolution; her mother, an African, may have been a freed slave.

That freedom was retained by Marie. She was beautiful, dark skinned and darker haired, with eyes that reverberated mystery, and she knew how to use that beauty; understood how her flesh shone when she stood in naked firelight, knew how her eyes glistened when she turned them straight toward you. Magic is so very much in the eye of the beholder, and Laveau knew exactly what she looked like.

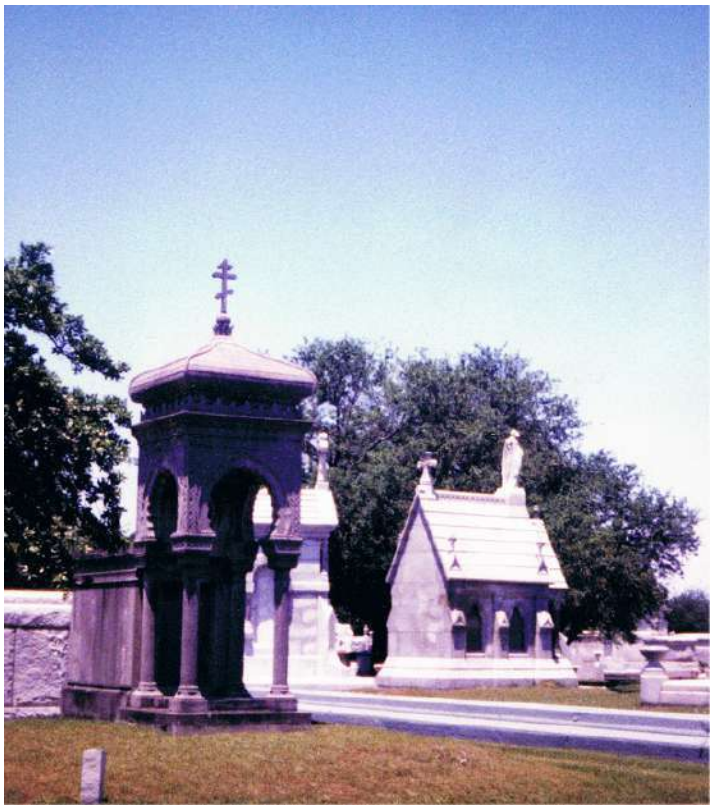
She worked as a nurse for a spell, and one legend claims she attended the wounded at the Battle of New Orleans; according to another, she was employed at the New Orleans jail, where she would calm the spirits of prisoners awaiting execution by serving them her own specially prepared homemade gumbo.

She married young, as was the custom, but her first husband, Jacques Paris, died soon after, and nobody seems to know whether or not she wed the man whom she bore no fewer than fifteen children, Christophe Glapion—but one of these, her daughter Marie, would also become renowned as a highly skilled voodoo practitioner, often working alongside her mother to give the impression that Marie Laveau could appear in two places at the same time. The two women, apparently, looked very much alike.

Marie's greatest dramas, however, took place on the Bayou Lafourche, where she would enact vast public voodoo rituals, dancing with her pet snake Zombi, calling down the elements and raising the waters, and pulling out of her hat what cynical onlookers would describe as every conjuring trick in the

book, to impress the onlookers not only with her power, but also with the knowledge that, if they should ever need a voodoo queen, then she was one they should seek. And when she died, and her body laid to rest, Number One Cemetery became briefly as congested as any downtown street, so many people poured out to pay their final respects and maybe make a final request.

Death, after all, was no obstacle to a true voodoo queen.



Years before the site became a burial ground, New Orleans's Metairie Cemetery was haunted by a luckless gambler.

Photo by Dave Thompson

The Chilling Revenge of Ms. Josie Arlington

In fact, Number One Cemetery and voodoo alike pale into spectral insignificance when placed alongside the equally prosaically named Cemetery Number Three, constructed on the already redolent site of the city's leper hospital and apparently still nursing the luckless victims of that disfiguring disease. And Number Three is dwarfed, in turn, by Metairie Cemetery, laid out as recently as 1872, but the scene of no little suffering and spookiness long before that.

The site was originally that of the Metairie Race Track, built in 1838 and originally haunted by a single luckless gambler who hanged himself after losing all his worldly goods on the horses.

He would not be alone for long, however.

Upon the outbreak of the Civil War, the racetrack became Camp Moore, a Confederate army base. The Confederate general Albert Sidney Johnstone would be buried here, following his death in 1877; his remains were later taken to Texas, but his tomb remains and alongside it, erected in 1885, there stands the life-size statue of a Confederate officer reading the roll of the Civil War dead. More than one late-night passerby has, in fact, heard the sound of his voice as well, softly intoning that long, long list.

New Orleans fell to the Union in 1862 and Camp Moore closed. It would be several years more, however, before horse racing returned to Metairie, and with it another installment in the site's strange history.

The infamous madam Josie Arlington ranks among Metairie Cemetery's best-known ghosts, even though she is no longer one of its residents.

Photo by Dave Thompson

Sometime around the end of the decade, the local businessman Charles T. Howard applied for membership of the Metairie Jockey Club. To nobody's surprise but his own, his petition was rejected. Howard's reputation was far from spotless, even by the murky standards of nineteenth-century New

Orleans, and he had been implicated in more than a handful of high-profile bribery cases.

Whether it was his victims or his opponents who cast the deciding votes, or simply disapproving peers who shivered at the thought of sharing their leisure time with such a man, Howard was refused membership. He did not, however, take the news very well. Rather, he delivered what some guide books like to call a curse upon the racetrack . . . but which more level-headed sources, his obituary in the *New York Times* (1885) for example, preferred to regard as characteristic business behavior.

"A noted instance of the manner in which he got even with those who refused to associate with him was afforded in his treatment of the Metairie Jockey Club. He sought an entrance in the company of this association, whose racecourse was the most noted in the South. The club, however, refused to admit him, and he swore that he would buy out their course and turn it into a graveyard. He bided his time, and when the opportunity came he did according to his oath."

The Metairie track went bankrupt and Howard was waiting. Under his patronage, in 1872 the Metairie Cemetery grew up where once the horses had raced, and swiftly it developed into New Orleans's most exclusive burial ground, the last port of call for everyone who was anyone in local society.

Which is why, toward the end of her life, one of the city's most notorious madams, Josie Arlington, decided it would be a suitable resting place for her own bones. Not because she considered herself to be any better than she ought to. But because she knew how deeply it would horrify and offend those society snobs who so publicly shunned her.

Prostitution was legal in New Orleans at the time, the consequence of a noble civic experimentation that established a sixteen-block red light district that was officially titled the District, but was soon renamed (to his eternal chagrin) for the local politician who worked the hardest to make it happen, Alderman Sidney Story.

For two full decades, 1897–1917, the sex trade thrived in an area bounded by the French Quarter and Interstate 10, and the present-day streets of St. Louis, North Robertson, Iberville and Basin. It was listed in the tourist guides and became one of the city's most popular attractions. It boasted its own directory of brothels and prostitutes, the Blue Book; it even had its own photographer—Ernest J. Bellocq, through whose surviving work so much of

what we today know about Storyville, and the women who worked there, is gleaned (the area itself has long since been swept away and redeveloped).

Bellocq is *possibly* the early-twentieth-century style photographer whose spirit has been seen hurrying through the old Storyville district, racing with his equipment to a century-old appointment, perhaps; and the romantics among us can also dream that at least a few of the ladies whose images he captured among the eighty-or-so photographs that survive today might also be numbered among the many other ghosts associated with the area.

Bellocq concentrated on photographing the working girls, the ensuing pictures most likely, it is believed, then being used in advertising. There is no evidence that the city's madams ever posed for him, because they did not need to. Like the captains of industry at the helm of every other walk of life, they had no need to promote themselves, because everyone already knew who they were—and Josie Arlington was the best known of them all.

She opened her first brothel on Customhouse Street in 1895, but the establishment of Storyville saw her relocate to far grander surroundings, a four-story mansion at 225 North Basin Street, the magnificently titled Chateau Lobrano d'Arlington. Up to a dozen girls worked there at a time, and it was not a cheap night out—the Arlington's most basic services cost $5, and Josie was constantly dreaming up fresh attractions, for further fees. One, whose possible content boggles the mind, was described as a Sex Circus.

Arlington closed her business in 1909 to embrace a luxurious retirement on the considerable savings and investments she had smartly salted away throughout her career. She never lost her taste for expensive indulgences, either, and the plans she made for her funeral and burial were especially flamboyant.

Two of the anonymous working girls photographed by the legendary E. J. Bellocq as he walked the streets of New Orleans's Storyville, circa 1911–1913.

Photo by E. J. Bellocq/Wikimedia Commons

Purchasing a plot of land at the cemetery, she commissioned one of the city's most notable funerary architects, the German-born Albert Weiblen, to design her the most flamboyant tomb the city had ever seen, hewn from red Stonington marble and placed on a hillock high enough that it looked down on all who were entombed around it. She then had a local sculptor, a gentleman named Bagon, create a bronze statue of a beautiful woman ascending the steps that were set into the face of the tomb, her arms cradling a bouquet of roses—and her back pointedly turned toward the living.

Ms. Arlington died on St. Valentine's Day, 1914. Even before then, however, her tomb was attracting whispers and rumors. One legend insisted that when the light from a nearby lamp hit the marble just right, the entire tomb appeared to be engulfed in flames, as though a gateway to Hell yawned in the heart of the Metairie dead. Another, which grew even more popular following Josie's death, was that the bronze statue itself was prone to walk the cemetery.

Eventually, the rumors grew so wild, and the sightseers so disruptive, that

Arlington's family had her body exhumed and placed in another, less conspicuous grave; and her original tomb was sold to another family. The lamp whose glow could cause the tomb to blaze was removed, and the sightseers soon drifted away.

But the bronze statue still walked, it was said, and another story began to be whispered, that Josie's spirit was not alone in Metairie. That she walked with a very set purpose in mind, to gather up the ghosts of the girls who had worked for her in life, when New Orleans's Storyville red light district was America's most successful and prosperous experiment in legalized prostitution, and Chateau Lobrano d'Arlington was the grandest of them all.

You *Can* Take It with You

From the bright lights of New Orleans, the avid fan of Louisiana cemeteries could take no more dramatic turn than toward the swamp lights of Manchac, and the mass grave that was perforcedly dug here to bury the victims of the Great West Indies Storm of September 1915.

Or, at least, the storm is what the official story blamed. Local lore, however. insists that the weather was simply the weapon that finished them off. The real killer was Aunt Julia Brown, the elderly voodoo priestess who owned almost all of the property around the town of Frenier Beach, out on Lake Pontchartrain, and who appeared to begrudge every tenant she had.

"One day I'm gonna die," she used to sing to herself, and to anyone who might be passing by as she sat out on her porch. "One day I'm gonna die, and I'm gonna take all of you with me." So she could not have timed her funeral more perfectly than to coincide with the landfall of a Category Three hurricane that modern equipment would tell us moved northwest from the Gulf of Mexico at around 14 mph, with sustained winds near its center of 115 mph, and which crashed into Frenier Beach like an express train.

At exactly the same time as Aunt Julia's funeral.

The old woman had certainly unnerved her fellow townspeople. But they had admired her as well, and the whole town was out to pay its final respects. The funeral service began at four, and that was precisely when the storm hit. Gathered around Aunt Julia's coffin, mourners were scattered as the windows of her house blew in and the walls peeled away.

Then the winds snatched up the coffin and carried it into the bayou, along

with everything else it could gather—livestock and the living included. Later, once the winds had died down and the waters finally started to recede, Aunt Julia's body was found deep within the cypress swamp.

But they only found her body. Her casket had disappeared, and so had more or less everything else she had owned. The personal possessions that she kept around her house, the house in which she lived, most of the property that she had collected around Frenier Beach, and a lot of the people who lived in it.

Speaking of earthly riches and treasures, people always say that when you go, you cannot take it with you, and maybe that's true. But Aunt Julia certainly put it someplace.

The bodies that could be found were buried in a mass grave in Manchac Swamp, floated across the lake on makeshift driftwood rafts, and for a century since then the swamp has howled with their restless, and so wronged spirits.

In 2009, A&E's *Extreme Paranormal* investigative team even visited the grave site, and although they returned with little more than a prime-time half hour of jumbled voodoo, mini-cam entombment, and the kind of outrageous exaggerations that only reality TV can supply, still it was one of the most captivating shows of its ilk ever broadcast. They found nothing, but that didn't mean that *something* wasn't there.

Besides, the cemetery is just one of Manchac's claims to fame because there's reasons aplenty why the locals used to call the place "the swamp of the ghosts."

Reasons like nearby Manchac Lighthouse, automated in 1941, decommissioned in 1987; derelict and barely accessible but, says legend, occupied to this day.

Reasons like the Blood Red Hanging Tree, an old-time instrument of local justice, whose strange fruit can still be seen hanging from its branches today.

Reasons like the Cajun *rougarou* that has stalked the swamp for centuries, and reasons like the ghostly highway that crosses the swamp where, until its deadly collapse in 1976, a modern road bridge once stood, although woe betide anyone who attempts trust to its tarmac today.

In fact, the only thing that Manchac Swamp has more of than ghosts and supernatural horrors is probably alligators. Which is maybe why not many people go there at night.

6

The Ghostly Gazetteer: Connecticut to DC

A Chilling Churchyard of Chattering Chimeras

A former TB clinic that specialized in treating child sufferers, Undercliff Sanatorium in **Meriden, Connecticut**, is still the playground for many of its patients, with the sounds of both laughter and tears familiar backdrop to any visit.

Built on the site of a Native American village in 1904, the Norwich State Hospital for the Insane in **Preston, Connecticut**, is as haunted as any old asylum ought to be. The most commonly noted spirits include two suicides—a patient and a nurse; a traffic fatality; and two employees killed when a water heater exploded.

A cat with glowing eyes is just one of the spirits said to stalk the old Carousel Gardens Restaurant in **Seymour, Connecticut**.

The Daniel Benton Homestead had stood at 154 Metcalf Road, in **Tolland, Connecticut**, since 1720, and several ghosts are said to call it home. None, however, are so touching as the spirits of Elisha Benton, grandson of the home's original builder, and his true love, Jemima Burrows. Captured by the British during the Revolutionary War, Elisha contracted smallpox aboard the prison ship where he was thrown, and was allowed home to die. Jemima nursed him to the end, when she too contracted and died of the disease. Aware of the young couple's love for each other, their families agreed to

bury them as close together as decency would allow, side by side on either side of a footpath. But their spirits are frequently seen seated or walking together.

Nobody knows whether she was an actress, a stagehand or a member of the audience. But something keeps drawing the apparition known as Victoria back to the Bradley Playhouse in **Putnam, Connecticut**.

A parishioner struck by lightning on the front steps of the Church of Eternal Light, a converted nineteenth-century schoolhouse in **Bristol, Connecticut**, would seem a reasonable candidate when wondering who walks the building when none should be there.

The Remington Arms Factory in **Bridgeport, Connecticut**, saw many fatal accidents in the years before its closure a quarter of a century or so ago. Accidents whose victims still walk the old floors.

Ragtime music plays where no musician stands, beds are slept in when no guests are in the room. The Talcott House in **Westbrook, Connecticut**, may or may not be haunted by its original owner, who is said to have died in a fire there. But *somebody* certainly seems to be doing it.

Old Nick . . . Satan himself . . . is said to hang out in **East Haddam, Connecticut**, in the aptly named Devil's Hopyard State Park. There he reclines on a boulder, playing his fiddle . . . and waiting, perhaps, for young musicians to visit, to ask how they, too, can learn to play as well as he does.

The paranormal TV investigator's delight, Fort Delaware was a Civil War prison, in the center of the Delaware River at **Delaware City, Delaware**. But does a small army worth of Confederate soldiers remain imprisoned there? A number of television programs say yes.

Bellevue Hall, situated in **Wilmington, Delaware**'s state park of the same name, is home to a handful of hauntings, all of whom seem to enjoy moving furniture, laughing aloud, and messing with the power supply. Also in that town, the Dead President's Tavern has nothing whatsoever to do with any genuinely deceased First Executive. But manic laughter and precipitous

temperature drops are commonplace, and the games room is popular with whichever spirits most enjoy moving objects around.

A former barracks dating back to the War of 1812, and a drafting center in the Civil War, the Smyrna Museum in **Smyrna, Delaware**, remains the home to several military spirits—seen and heard by visitors.

Back in the 1800s, a local slave was in the habit of relaxing with his fiddle. A cruel owner beat him once too often, and he fled, to live wild in the lonely woods around **St. Georges, Delaware**, still playing his fiddle until the day he died—drowned in Scott's Run. Today, a modern highway bridges the fatal spot, but for many years if you stopped the car and threw a dime from the bridge into the water, you would be rewarded with the sweet sound of a ghostly fiddle.

Anybody who lives with a writer knows that the sound of them plying their trade is one of life's most distinctive. So, when visitors to the John Dickinson Plantation in **Dover, Delaware**, hear a quill scratching in the dead of night, they know that the so-called "Penman of the Revolutionary War" is hard at work again.

A suicide in the early 1980s, in what was then undeveloped land at Corner Ketch, in **Newark, Delaware**, is said to be responsible for the flannel-shirted youth who walks through the church and parking lot that now stand on the site. And a few miles away in the same town, it is said an entire family of six was hanged in the 1900s, accused of practicing witchcraft. It is uncertain whether the street on which they lived was already named Salem Church Road, but it's an apt name regardless. The six are still seen walking down the road, and have also been blamed for the high number of accidents that the street is said to suffer.

A pitched battle between Native American warriors and unsuspecting Dutch settlers is responsible, it is said, for the unsettling sights and sounds that stalk the Bay Oaks subdivision in **Lewes, Delaware**. Nearby, Cannonball House was built in 1765 and is one of the few survivors of the shelling of the town by the British in 1813. The cannonball that remains lodged in one wall (and that gives the house its name) testifies to that. But the ghostly screams that

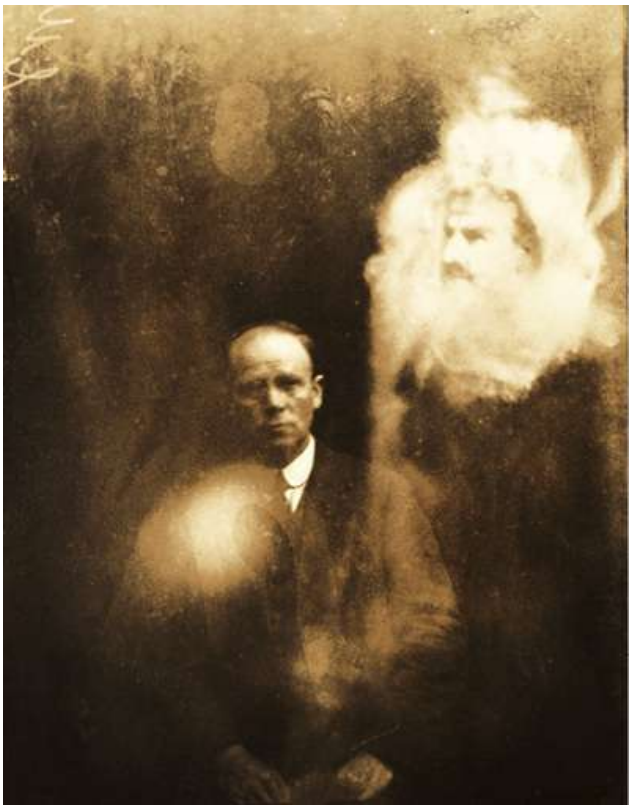
haunt the house appear to have no military source—a rare example, to the ghost hunter's delight, of a building whose ghost is irrelevant to its fame.

It's unclear whether or not the Governor's Cafe, in **Dover, Delaware**, is itself haunted. But look closely at the paintings of the old town that hang on the establishment's walls and you'll see that almost every house in every picture has a resident spook of its own.

It sounds more like a teenage dare than an actual haunting, but if you park your car on Old Maggie's Bridge, in **Seaford, Delaware**, and call out "Maggie, I have your baby," you will meet the spirit of the young pregnant lady who was apparently killed in a long ago car crash.

The staircase and the fifth-floor lounge of Kerby Hall, at Trinity Washington University, **Washington, DC**, are both the haunt of a female student who died here in the late 1960s.

Years before the modern Hay-Adams Hotel was built in **Washington, DC**, the site was home to a certain Marian Hooper Adams, who committed suicide, it is said, by drinking potassium cyanide. Her spirit was the subsequent hotel's first guest and will likely be its last.



One of the spirit photographer William Hope's creative glimpses into the afterlife.
Photo by William Hope/National Media Museum/Wikimedia Commons

Ulysses S. Grant is said to walk the Willard InterContinental Hotel in **Washington, DC**; and Woodrow Wilson still sits in his favorite rocker at the house and museum that bear his name.

War hero Commodore Stephen Decatur Jr. haunts the **Washington, DC** home that bears his name—and where he was killed in a duel, little more than a year after moving in.

The Octagon House at 545 Eighteenth Street NW, **Washington, DC**, was built in 1799 by Colonel John Tahoe—whose pregnant daughter flung herself from the topmost floor after learning that her father had shot and killed her lover. Her grieving ghost still haunts the halls.

Late into the night, a woman in white walks the Treasury Annex, at 701 Madison Place NW, **Washington, DC**.

Fort McNair, **Washington, DC**, is where Mary Surratt, an accomplice of

John Wilkes Booth, was imprisoned and, in Building 21, executed for her part in the assassination of President Lincoln. Are those her footsteps that are heard taking the short walk to the gallows, night after night?

A phantom stagecoach still races across **Washington, DC**'s M Street Bridge at night, and a drummer boy who fell from the span into the water can sometimes be heard playing, too.

Be careful where you sit at the National Museum of Crime and Punishment in **Washington, DC**. An electric chair, used in Tennessee between 1916 and 1960, is on display and is said to still be visited by at least a few of the 125 men it dispatched over the years.

7

A Ghost Town

And the Ghosts That Haunt It

Louisiana cemeteries are renowned because they are so visible. Accursed, desecrated Native burial grounds because—until it is too late—they are so well hidden. And all of those others we have mentioned, because someone, at some time, saw or heard something they couldn't explain, and recorded it for posterity. That is often all it takes, after all. One inexplicable experience and the ghostly gazetteer has a brand-new entry.

Most graveyards, however, simply sit quietly awaiting discovery, without much more than a whisper or even a legend to sustain their reputation.

There is a peaceful plot in Groton, Massachusetts, for example, of which onetime local resident Amy Hanson writes, "Were there ghosts in the Old Burying Ground in Groton? Probably. How could there not be, it was so old! But what I remember most about the cemetery, other than the fact that it's the perfect picture of a Colonial New England burying ground, are the Lover's Stones. There are two large stones, set in the earth over husband and wife, that have crossed in toward one other, so they are touching. The story goes that their love endured beyond death and the stones crossed so they would always be together."

A lovely story, a precious vision, and there are far more cemeteries that have instances like that, than which possess restless spirits or mischievous shades.

There are others, however, that have both. A history and a haunt.

Visit Mount Pisgah Cemetery in Cripple Creek, Colorado, today, and you will witness it in all of its glory, restored and refurbished as part of the citywide regeneration that commenced in the early 1990s. Its current magnificence, however, is mere veneer upon its past. For so many decades

before its rejuvenation, Mount Pisgah lay in the same state of disrepair and dilapidation as the rest of Cripple Creek—that is, one step removed from being absolute abandonment.

Grave markers had been damaged and lost. Graves had subsided, and weeds and trees interrupted the sleep of even the most safely interred resident. There were ghosts aplenty walking its grounds. The problem was, for the most part, the only eyes that ever saw them belonged to other ghosts.

True love never dies: a husband and wife still touch in the Old Burial Ground in Groton, Massachusetts.

Photo by Amy Hanson

Cripple Creek was never a literal ghost town; was never completely abandoned to the elements. But it clung as close to that precipice as was possible, a once-bustling mountain metropolis that first faded, and then crumbled, into obscurity.

Named not for some local peak, but for the mountain in the Biblical Book of Deuteronomy, Mount Pisgah Cemetery had seen almost the entire history of this once-prosperous mining community pass by. It was opened in 1892, less than two years after the original gold strike brought the first wild-eyed

prospectors to the foot of Pikes Peak, and less than a year after the Denver real estate firm of Bennett and Myers commenced work on the eighty-acre township they called Fremont. The principal east-west streets, the agents named for themselves, Mr. Myers and Mr. Bennett. The others took their names from the area foreman, G. W. Carr; an insurance salesman, Seymour Warren; and Myers's brother-in-law, William Eaton.

For some time, Fremont existed side by side with a second town, laid out in early 1892 and bearing the more familiar name of Cripple Creek. The two were united in February 1893, but although Cripple Creek gave its name to the new city, it was the Fremont area that always dominated. On Bennett, the businesses sprung up. On Myers, the row of cribs that became the best-known red light district west of the Mississippi.

Saloons and casinos followed and, by 1893, Cripple Creek boasted three bathhouses, four dance halls, five fraternal lodges, six bookstores, nine hotels, ten meat markets, eleven parlor houses, twenty-four grocers, thirty-six real estate agents and forty-four lawyers.

No longer a rough-and-tumble frontier gold camp, it was now a city with a population that had soared from five hundred to ten thousand in less than three years. Ultimately, half a billion dollars worth of ore would be extracted from the ground around Cripple Creek, although it is sadly ironic that the man who started the rush, the prospector Robert Miller Womack . . . Bob to his buddies . . . himself died penniless in 1909.

If his spirit had any unfinished business or thoughts of vengeance on its mind, however, it would need to take its place in a very long line. As with any gold-mining town, fortunes were made and lost in Cripple Creek as fast as one could blink, but the city itself had troubles that even the most successful mining could only partially assuage: the great labor strike of 1894, so rancorous that the governor was forced to call out the National Guard to protect the miners from the mine owners, as opposed to the usual other way around; two devastating fires just four days apart in April 1896, leveling first one half of the infant city, and then the other.

And then there were the Tommy Knockers.

Tommy Knocking in the Cripple Creek Goldfields

The first Tommy Knockers came to America with the first English miners . . .

specifically, the first Cornish miners . . . stowing away in their psychic baggage but losing none of their mischievous ingenuity on their journey.

Who were they? Some said they were the spirits of miners who died on the job. Others thought of them as jealous earth spirits, guarding their treasures from avaricious man. According to W. Y. Evans-Wentz, author of the monumental *The Fairy Faith in Celtic Countries*, published in 1911, "The Knockers or Knackers are mine-spirits . . . The story, as I have always heard it, is that they are the spirits of Jews who were sent by the Romans to work in the tin mines, some say for being concerned in the Crucifixion of our Lord, which sounds improbable."

Some, like Evans-Wentz, saw them as "benevolent spirits, [who] warn miners of danger." Others thought of them as malign portenders of disasters that they themselves precipitated. Others still thought they were just having fun. Most everyone who encountered them, in fact, had their own theory as to who or what they were.

Victor, Colorado, in the early 1990s—a ghost town in which every building felt haunted.

Photo by Dave Thompson

One thing was certain, though. If a miner looked like he was striking gold, the Knockers would lure him off course with their tapping and whispering and knocking. If he found a vein despite their efforts, they'd hide it the moment his back was turned. Tools would be misplaced, equipment would break down.

You would never strike pay dirt while the Knockers were about, which is

why local legend was so proud of Jonce Barbee. He was not the only Cripple Creek gold miner who suffered from the attentions of the Tommy Knockers, but he was one of the very few who was able to outwit them. Even with every instinct in his body telling him that he was standing atop the greatest gold strike of his life, there were days when he felt that he might never find it. But finally he had an idea.

"I guess I'd grown desperate, knowing that ore was there, almost hitting it time and time gain, and then losing the scent," Barbee wrote. "I couldn't figure it out to save my life. Then it occurred to me that maybe if I changed the name of the mine, my luck would change too, and the little stinkers tormenting me would get lost too. I chose to call it Cripple Creek Columbia, and swore myself to secrecy lest the imps get onto it. And as sure as I'm sitting here, the next day I ran into the most beautiful lode of sylvanite I'd ever seen."

Sylvanite, the gold-bearing ore that is characteristic to the Pikes Peak region, is a deceptive beast. The earliest surveyors simply threw it to one side, referring to the dirty gray rock as "white iron." And the Knockers were equally deceptive, so they made a good team. Jonce Barbee's ingenuity notwithstanding, when the final Cripple Creek mine breathed its last, some people said the Knockers had taken the city by storm. It would never be the same again.

Gold Camp Road

As recently as the early 1990s, Cripple Creek was an anomaly in the modern-day tourist guidebook. At a time when America's past was increasingly being served up packaged in supermarket cellophane, row upon row of bite-sized "historical districts" spitting off the production line, each with its own picture-postcard reconstructions and serried ranks of souvenir stores, Cripple Creek struck the visitor like a breath of fresh air.

Or maybe "fresh" was the wrong word. Disused and dismantled mines clung to the surrounding landscape like rotting teeth, their cavities fenced off by rusting "Danger—no trespassing" signs, their fetid breath almost visibly poisoning any nearby trees and grass.

Even getting there was a fraught experience. The railroad had long since closed. Now the most direct access, at least from nearby Colorado Springs,

was via Gold Camp Road, a mountainside road that winds precipitously between the two communities and has never had a happy reputation.

Car wrecks are commonplace, injuries ten-a-penny, and tragedy stalks every one of its tunnels. Countless workers died during their construction, and their spirits can still be seen and heard. So can the screams and panic of the children who allegedly perished when their school bus crashed in one of the tunnels and brought its roof crashing down on them. If you inspect your own car carefully once you have left the road behind you, you might even see their tiny handprints on your doors.

You survived the drive and wondered why you'd bothered. Cripple Creek, once you arrived there, showed few—if any—signs of its former opulence. The structures that lined Bennett Avenue, the main thoroughfare through town, were for the most part the dilapidated remnants of those built immediately after the two great fires. Many looked as though they had not been painted since then.

The Old Homestead, Cripple Creek's most notorious brothel, still stood; so did the Imperial Hotel and the Midland Railroad depot. But all were cloaked with the same dingy shroud, the sense of impossible age and incorrigible decay that permeated the entire city, the oppressive weight of untouched, unpolished history that carpeted all it touched in the dust of the years gone by.

A postcard showing the Old Homestead in Cripple Creek, a relic of the town's red light past.

Author's collection

All of that has changed now. Today, Cripple Creek is one of the jewels in Colorado's crown, a gambling mecca that has been repainted and restored with such skill that it is hard to believe there was ever a time when, far from the modern melee of ghost hunters pursuing the city's spooks, it was the spooks who were out hunting people.

There is no doubting who outnumbered whom. Mining accidents that were punctuated by mining disasters; floods, fires, and labor disputes marked only one half of Cripple Creek's claim on notoriety. At one point, at the height of its early twentieth-century renown, Cripple Creek was boasting at least one homicide every single day of the year. Many places claim to be the most haunted place in America, and many do indeed have just cause to do so.

But Cripple Creek might just shade them all.

The old Fairley Brothers and Lampman Building at 300 East Bennett Avenue is a solid, three-story brick building that housed lawyers, Masons, pharmacists, engineers and milliners in the years before it became the Colorado Grande Casino and Maggie's Restaurant. Its actual namesakes, however, were the firm of morticians who took up residence on the basement level and whose business, one would assume, would proffer ample opportunity for the building to be well haunted.

An Original Gibson Girl

It is, but not by any of the Fairley Brothers' customers. It is the old ballroom that stretches across the top floor of the building that echoes with voices and the sounds of dancing feet at night; from whence mysterious blue lights swirl down to lower floors; and where you are most likely to encounter Maggie, the archetypal Gibson Girl in white shirtwaist, ankle-length skirt and hair pinned in a roll.

It's Maggie who used to turn on the upstairs lights when no one whatsoever was in the building—a habit that even the local police became wearily familiar with. It is Maggie whose rose perfume sometimes wafts through the rooms; Maggie who has even been sighted playing the slots after hours, in the company of an unknown gentleman friend. Occasionally, it is said, the pair have even been captured on the security cameras, but the footage always vanishes as soon as it has been viewed.

Cripple Creek long ago accustomed itself to repurposing buildings, and if a

mortician’s parlor can become a casino, why should a hospital not become a hotel? That was the eventual fate of St. Nicholas Hospital, opened by the Sisters of Mercy in January 1894 and, by 1900, administering to the medical requirements of some fifty-five thousand people in Cripple Creek and the surrounding region.

The original hospital survived just two years. On April 25, 1896, fire broke out in Cripple Creek, ignited in one of the Myers Avenue brothels during a dispute regarding what we might today term “customer service.” Half the city was devoured, but the other half, the parts that survived, had little time in which to celebrate their good fortune. Four days later, another equally devastating blaze erupted, its aim set on the rest of the city.

It was in the midst of the ensuing chaos that a member of the ferociously anti-Catholic American Protective Association took advantage of the uproar to dynamite St. Nicholas’s!

In the event, he merely dented the hospital kitchens, and actually suffered greater damage to his own self—the blast took off one of his legs. Still the hospital was sufficiently damaged by the fire that a new building was required and, in 1898, St. Nicholas’s reopened in an elegant three-story brick building on North Third, designed by John J. Huddart, one of Denver’s most noted architects. The Sisters lived on the third floor.

The new building was everything a modern hospital could be, “thoroughly equipped with all modern improvements,” said a period article, “beautifully located with the best physicians in the district in attendance.” The slow decline of Cripple Creek, however, saw the slow decline of the hospital, too. The Sisters sold up and departed Cripple Creek in 1924, leaving the hospital to be owned and operated privately by a succession of local physicians. It finally closed for good in 1972 and lay abandoned for some two decades thereafter.

But regeneration awaited the building and, with it, a handful of its former patients and nursing staff found themselves with an audience once again.

Operated as it was by the Sisters of Mercy, the hospital almost naturally possesses its ghostly nuns—any place where a figure appears in some form of shrouded apparel will automatically be cast in that light. They drift silently through the corridors, still conducting the business that occupied them in life. Even during the building’s years of emptiness and abandonment, most witnesses to their passage reported nothing more than a warm feeling of

incredible peace.

But Petey is a spirit child who was known for mischievously hiding people's cigarettes, in the days when one could still smoke in the building; and Stinky . . . well, Stinky stinks, a ghost who manifests on a back stairway only as a disgusting odor.

The lower torso and legs of an unnamed miner apparently remember an otherwise long forgotten mining disaster; and screams and cries from what were once the hospital wards doubtless testify to the awful injuries sustained in other mining accidents. Local guidebooks even warn that the inmates of the hospital's former mental ward are still to be heard in the relevant quarters.

Pearl de Vere

But you're in Cripple Creek. You throw a stone, you hit a ghost. The Turf Club, on East Bennett Avenue, was built in 1896, a men's club that is now Buffalo Billy's. A little girl named Lilly is often seen on the staircase, cradling her rag doll or admiring the drawings and paintings that she has daubed on the walls, but which will fade before they can be photographed. More than one visitor to the casino, losing sight of their own small child, will later discover him or her still happy after playing games with a new friend named Lilly.

The old Palace Hotel on Bennett Avenue is haunted by its Edwardian-era owner, Kitty Chambers—she died in 1908, but continued folding down the guests' bedding and seeing to the everyday demands of the establishment for many years after. Another hotel, turned casino, the former Collins Hotel, is still visited by its own former proprietor, an Englishman named George Long—murdered, it is said, by his deranged teenage daughter Alice, who brained him with a cast iron skillet as he was coming up the stairs. George, apparently, flirts with the ladies, flushes the toilet and plays on the slots. Alice, whom her parents had kept locked away in her own bedroom, just sits and scratches on what was her door (but is now that of the Red Rooster Bar).

Life is no quieter underground than above it. In 1894, the Mamie R. Mine was invaded at a particularly delicate moment, not only by the Tommy Knockers but also by another a miner, a stranger, who appeared out of nowhere and walked slowly toward the primed charges.

Photographed in 1990, the resting place of Pearl de Vere, at Mount Pisgah cemetery, in Cripple Creek, Colorado.

Photo by Dave Thompson

The other miners, the living ones who thought at that point that the newcomer, too, was living, called for him to stop, warned him that the wall was about to blow. The miner ignored them. The explosives fired and the men rushed toward the spot, choking back the dust and smoke, to find the new arrival lying there, bathed in his own gore. One arm had been severed; he held it in his other hand. But when the miners reached for him, he vanished into thin air. They were left clutching at ghosts while, all around them, the Knockers muttered, mumbled and giggled, then scuttled off to lead other men astray with their tappings and bangings.

All of Cripple Creek's dead found their way to Mount Pisgah, of course, from the lowliest miner to the wealthiest gold baron, and most of the city's historians and ghost hunters have their own theories as to whom amongst them are numbered within the throngs that walk the cemetery's paths at night.

All researchers, however, are in agreement about one of them—and it is, perhaps, fitting that just as our last chapter was visited by the vengeful spirit of one century-old madam, this one should close with a gentler, happier one.

Pearl de Vere was the madam of Cripple Creek's most luxurious brothel, the Old Homestead. Back east, her family thought she was a dress designer, working for the wives of Cripple Creek's mineral aristocracy. In fact, so devoted were they to this story that, when Pearl's sister traveled out to Cripple Creek to see her sibling's body, laid out at Fairley Bros. and Lampman's, she took one look at the corpse's dyed hair and painted face . . . had one conversation with a local who told her Pearl's true profession . . . and she caught the first railroad train home again.

The townspeople, however, loved Pearl. Mining towns rarely stood on ceremony when it came to matters of morality or decency. They judged people by their actions and their deeds, not according to whether they went to church every Sunday and appeared to follow the Ten Commandments. Even the local pastor spoke out against Pearl's sister's disdainful behavior, and when it became known that there was not enough money in the estate to pay for the kind of funeral that people felt Pearl deserved, they set about raising the money themselves.

A tree tears through a child's grave in Mount Pisgah cemetery in Cripple Creek, Colorado.

Photo by Dave Thompson

Pearl's death was one of the biggest shocks Cripple Creek society had ever suffered. It was June 5, 1897, and the vivacious beauty, resplendent in an $800 Parisian ball gown, was hostessing one of her famous parties at the Old Homestead—when she quietly left the event, went upstairs to her room, and

took a massive overdose of morphine.

Days before, it was later rumored, she had received news that she had been jilted by the wealthy Denver mine owner she believed she was about to marry. When a donation of $1,000 was received to cover Pearl's funeral costs, few were in doubt as to which guilty conscience had sent it.

Pearl was buried, still resplendent in her ball gown, high in the southeastern quarter of the cemetery. Much of the city turned out to bid her farewell—and she was never to be forgotten.

During the 1950s, the wooden marker at her grave was replaced by a simple but beautiful stone (the original marker was donated to the local museum); in 1977, a local resident, Myke Minnow, organized a full scale reenactment of Pearl's funeral procession. And in between times, and on either side as well, Pearl herself would walk gracefully across the cemetery, through the gates, and out into the town that she had loved, and that had loved her just as much in return.

8

The Ghostly Gazetteer: Florida to Georgia

A Dismal Dungeon Draped with Darkness

The Bloody Bucket Bridge, on Griffin Road in **Wauchula, Florida**, is well named. Many years ago, a slave midwife would take the bodies of stillborn babies . . . and, it is said, others whom she smothered at birth, knowing that the parents could not afford to feed another hungry mouth . . . to a spot near the bridge to bury. She carried the tiny corpses in a bucket, which mysteriously was always full to the brim with blood. But she would empty it, too, into the river. Until the tragic day when, as she emptied her bucket, she slipped and fell into the water. She drowned, but for days after, the river ran red with blood. Which, when the moon is full, it still does.

An old man walking and a woman screaming are the ghosts that occupy the Church of the Nazarene in **Putnam, Florida**.

Originally built in **West Palm Beach, Florida**, but now a part of the Yesteryear Village theme park, the Riddle House was a funeral parlor operated by one Karl Riddle in the early twentieth century. It is haunted today by one of its earliest employees, a young man named Joseph who hanged himself in the basement.

A woman killed in a fire in 1887 still haunts the site of her demise, now a seafood restaurant on the Scenic and Historic Coastal Byway, in **St. Augustine, Florida**. Close by, Spanish soldiers still walk the seventeenth-century Castillo de San Marcos, the oldest masonry fort in the United States.

The old Princeton psychiatric hospital in **Orlando, Florida**, is said still to be populated by former patients and staff, who delight in pushing wheelchairs about or staring sadly out of the shadows at passersby.

Three astronauts perished in a fire on the Apollo launchpad in Complex 34 of the Kennedy Space Center in **Cape Canaveral, Florida**. Visitors insist that they experience "eerie feelings" on the spot.

Long before it became the Treasure Coast Antique Mall in **Fort Pierce, Florida**, this distinctive building served as an inn, a bar and even a brothel—which is what it was the day, back in the 1950s, when a woman marched in and shot her cheating husband as he came down the stairs. His ghost remains on the staircase.

One of the best known, but most controversial haunted spots in America, the Eastern Airlines Flight 401 crash site at **Miami-Dade, Florida**, marks where 101 people died in December 1972—and lies just a couple of miles from where another air disaster, the crash of ValuJet Flight 592, took 100 lives in May 1996. The psychic disturbances at these sites are to be expected; the spirits of the earlier flight's crew, however, would go on to be recorded aboard other Eastern Airlines flights, en route to becoming the most celebrated spirits in the annals of American aviation.

The WXLT television studios in **Sarasota, Florida**, still reverberate to the single gunshot with which reporter Christine Chubbuck took her own life on July 15, 1974—while presenting her weekly live talk show, *Suncoast Digest*. Having first reported on a local shooting she then announced, "In keeping with Channel 40's policy of bringing you the latest in blood and guts . . . and in living color. You are going to see another first—attempted suicide." She then pulled a .38 caliber pistol out from beneath the anchor desk and shot herself behind one ear.

Old Clay County Jail in **Green Cove Springs, Florida**, is one of the oldest jails in the country—and at least five men were hanged on its front steps. Some of those luckless souls still linger.

In a locked room inside the Lear-Rocheblave House in **Pensacola, Florida**,

one of the home's original owners' daughters still dances across the floor. In the same city, the Gray House is haunted by Thomas Moristo, an eighteenth-century sea dog who stands at the windows gazing out at the water, or who moves around the building's interior, switching stoves on and off, and moving things around.

Sylvia is the shy, dark-haired beauty who has spent the past 150 years haunting the second floor of the stately Greek Revival–style Panola Hall, in **Eatonton, Georgia**.

The smell of spectral cigar smoke permeates the Old Governor's Mansion in **Milledgeville, Georgia**, although it is unclear which of the state's incumbents—whose residence this was between 1838 and 1868—is responsible.

Another William Hope effort—a séance in full swing.

Photo by William Hope/National Media Museum/Wikimedia Commons

Early in the 1900s, distressed by what she perceived as her tragic lot in life, a student named Agnes hanged herself at Brenau University in **Gainesville,**

Georgia. But she is still hanging around the campus.

One Charles P. Ray built what became the Southern Oaks Inn in **Lavonia, Georgia**, in 1918. He intended it to be used as a private home, and he didn't leave when he died. Both he and his wife have been seen and heard around their former dwelling.

While Room 203 of Kehoe House in **Savannah, Georgia**, has a Lady in Gray, the surrounding house and grounds are the province of several child ghosts. And Room 325 at the East Bay Inn is haunted by a workman named Charlie, engaged in the building's construction when he fell to his death from that very room. Another Savannah inn, the Eliza Thompson House on West Jones Street, is named for the widow who raised seven children here following the death of her cotton dealer husband Joe in 1855. Perhaps she is the ghostly woman in white who drifts through both the house's history and its halls.

Emily, the story goes, lived in the house that became the Partridge Inn, in **Augusta, Georgia**, and was eagerly awaiting her upcoming wedding when she learned that her fiancé had been suddenly killed. She died, it is said, of a broken heart, still wearing her wedding dress, and her ghost continues wearing it today.

There are thrills aplenty to be found at the Six Flags Over Georgia park in **Austell, Georgia**. Particularly for anyone venturing into the Crystal Pistol Music Hall, where an actor named Joe is often to be seen watching performances from the edge of the balcony—and that despite having died on his way into work, back in 1967.

A former Civil War hospital, the Village Inn bed and breakfast in **Stone Mountain, Georgia**, is haunted not only by mysterious footsteps and whistling, but also by the tapping of Morse code messages.

A fatal fire that swept through what is now the Masquerade nightclub, on North Avenue in **Atlanta, Georgia**, is said to be responsible for the restless spirits that spend their evenings there today.

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Apparently I Didn’t Wake Up This Morning

The Ghost of the Blues

Back in 2003, Eric Isaacson, a record store owner in Portland, Oregon, was still a novice when it came to valuing and buying record collections. His store, Mississippi Records, had been open for just a few months, and it was his first ever taste of retail life.

But still he knew that donning a bright yellow hazmat suit, respirator and miner’s flashlight, and descending into an unlit, unventilated basement choked with mold, jars of urine and forty-year-old Coca-Cola bottles was not something that the average record store owner ever found himself called upon to do.

It was worth it, though. In a home occupied only by “a very sweet elderly lady,” Isaacson told *Wire* magazine in August 2014, the basement had been the domain of her brother, in his prime the leader of a local big band, whose onstage gimmickry included an incredible glitter-encrusted tuxedo. Later in life, he suffered dementia, “as well as a strange and rare disease that not only rendered him blind, but also, on occasion, made his eyes cry tears of blood.” But he maintained his record collection throughout all of his torments.

It was that collection, shelf upon shelf of old, precious and often still-sealed LP records, that Isaacson was excavating from that dark, stinking, moldering pit of a basement. “It was the hottest part of summer . . . but every time I was ready to throw in the towel, I would find some insanely beautiful record still sealed.”

So Isaacson battled on, fighting the stench, fighting the heat, fighting the sheer disgust of his surroundings. And then he felt it. A presence behind him.

He turned, his heart hammering in his ears. And, “for a split second, I saw the bandleader in his glitter tux right next to me, breathing heavy and bleeding from his eyes.”

Isaacson fled, and it was days before he dared return to finish the job. But when he did, he knew why the old trouper had been waiting for him. For the very first records that he pulled off the shelf were sealed promotional copies of the first five Bob Dylan LPs—*Bob Dylan*, *The Freewheelin’ Bob Dylan*, *The Times They Are A-Changing*, *Another Side of Bob Dylan* and *Bringing It All Back Home*. “Ghost protected treasures,” said Isaacson, “[that] I ended up selling for what felt like a small fortune.”

Half the money, Isaacson gave to the sister, who spent it on a gravestone for her brother. The rest he kept for himself, to help finance the launch of his own record label, Mississippi Records, and maybe when the night is right; when the moon is full and the air is still, and you pick up one of the label’s first-ever albums, a collection of 1920s blues titled after Geeshie Wiley’s so fittingly haunting “Last Kind Words,” maybe the fourteen tracks pressed onto the vinyl will become, just for one moment, fifteen.

The old bandleader will be leading his band once again.

It is one of the most pervasive of all urban legends—the music fan, mourning the recent death of a favorite performer, listening to a recording by the fallen idol, and being startled by the appearance, at the end of the disc, of another song that had never been there before.

The story has been told of Edison Cylinders, the first popularly available means by which recorded music could be sold, back at the end of the nineteenth century. It has been told of 78s and long playing albums, of 8-track cartridges and compact discs, of MP3s and streaming media.

The phenomenon was reported following the death of Enrico Caruso in 1920, and Kurt Cobain in 1994. Phantom recordings were heard by fans of Elvis in 1977 and lovers of Lennon in 1980. And all had just one thing in common. No matter how many times the listener played the song for him- or herself, the moment another pair of ears entered the equation, the song would vanish. Like a ghost.

It was inevitable that the spirit world should be fascinated by sound recordings, although we still await conclusive evidence of whether they thought it was a good idea or a bad one. Or whether they have found another purpose for it altogether.

In Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, in 1909, a Mr. and Mrs. McGrail were sitting around their backyard one evening, listening to music on the family phonograph. A neighbor had recently given them some new records, among them a recording of the hymn “Holy Holy Holy”—one of Mrs. McGrail’s personal favorites. In fact, barely had the record ended, and her husband lifted it from the turntable, than she asked him to play it again. He moved to replace it on the turntable, and the record inexplicably broke in half.

Baffled, he reached for another of his wife’s favorite songs, and that disc too shattered—at the precise same moment as Mrs. McGrail emitted a scream that was all but the last sound she ever uttered. Suddenly, but clearly ill as she sat there, she only worsened as the evening wore on and, within just a few hours, she was dead. “The breaking of the records,” declared the *Adams County News*, “had been death’s token.”

Speaking with Spooks

It looks like a modern fancy, some new-fangled gizmo that tells us only how desperate science is to prove or disprove this ghost business once and for all. But the modern television ghost hunter’s obsession with electronic voice phenomena (EVP) does, in fact, date back to the earliest days of the recording industry—which itself coincided with the last years of the mania for Spiritualism that gripped the Western world.

Deep into the 1920s, even as other means of recording spirit encounters were ridiculed by the experts, mediums wrestled with the recording technology of the day, desperate to capture the true sound of a manifestation. Some thought they may have succeeded. Others tried to convince the gullible that they had. But, in truth, it was looking more and more like a dead end.

Part of the problem, the American photographer and medium Attila von Szalay explained, was the nature of recording technology at the time. There was no magnetic tape in those days, no MP3s, either. Sounds were recorded live onto a 78 rpm record, with just a three-minute window in which something could happen and be captured. And ghosts are notoriously bad timekeepers when it’s somebody else’s schedule at stake. Von Szalay persevered, piling up the 78s after every session. But rarely was he blessed with any result that even the most credulous witness would refer to as “evidence.”

Into the mid-1950s and now we find von Szalay working with reel-to-reel tape, a far more forgiving medium and a far more flexible one, as well. Recordings of far greater duration were within reach, and in 1956, with his microphone placed inside a well-insulated haunted cabinet, von Szalay succeeded in recording the first-ever voices from beyond—disconnected and utterly unidentifiable voices making such remarks as “Hot dog,” and “Merry Christmas.”

No matter the comments themselves were obtuse, to say the least. They were comments all the same.

The genie was out of the bottle. In 1959, Swedish painter Friedrich Jürgenson discovered the voices of both his late wife and his father on a tape he had made of birdsong; and a decade later, Konstantin Raudive, a Latvian psychologist working at the University of Uppsala, also in Sweden, conducted the series of experiments that resulted in the 1968 book *Breakthrough: An Amazing Experiment in Electronic Communication with the Dead*.

The science developed from there, and today, EVP is so much a part of the ghost hunter’s kit that it is difficult to imagine how they ever got by without it. But even within these rarified strata of research, no universally acceptable explanation has ever been given for the existence of the ghost song—neither those that are apparently previewed to just a single individual and then lost forever; nor those that, through sundry sequences of even more convoluted events, are ultimately revealed to the outside world in general.

Being for the Benefit of the Late Mr. Lennon

John Lennon’s former Beatles bandmates, Ringo Starr, George Harrison and Paul McCartney, were united in the belief that their fallen comrade was in the studio alongside them as they recorded one of his previously unreleased compositions, “Free as a Bird,” for a 1995 Beatles single.

“There were a lot of strange goings-on in the studio,” Paul McCartney explained in the aftermath of the sessions. “Noises that shouldn’t have been there and equipment doing all manner of weird things. There was just an overall feeling that John was around.”

John Lennon’s ghost not only appeared to an English medium, it dictated his latest compositions to her, too. Shown here is the great Beatle, very much alive, in the film *How I Won the War* (1967).

United Artists/Photofest

On another occasion shortly after, during a photo shoot for the finished record, the three Beatles were astonished to be joined by a white peacock. It had, apparently, wandered over from a neighboring farm, but McCartney had no doubt as to who it was. “That’s John,” he said to his bandmates. “Spooky, eh?”

They should not have been surprised.

Lennon had told several friends about his own sighting of a ghost himself, the “Crying Lady Ghost” who stalked the corridors of the Dakota, the apartment building where he lived, and outside which he was shot. But he was also cautious enough in his beliefs that he told his first wife, Cynthia, that he would certainly send her a message if there was life after death. *If.*

What sort of message, she asked. A feather, he replied. And in 1986, six years after his December 1980 assassination, Cynthia discovered a dead jackdaw wrapped in an old 1956 newspaper behind her fireplace.

Reports of Lennon’s spirit had been reported almost since his death, with the British *Sunday Mirror* newspaper rounding up a clutch of reports in May 1983. Several visitors to the Dakota “claim to have seen his ghostly figure, wearing familiar round glasses. Friends of his wife, Yoko Ono, say that John’s spirit has spoken to her.”

A local musician, Joey Harrow, told how he and a writer friend, Amanda

Mores, saw the ghost at the entranceway to the building one night, on the spot where he was gunned down. “He was surrounded by an eerie light,” marveled Harrow, while Mores continued, “I wanted to go up and talk to him, but something in the way he looked at me said no.”

Neither was Lennon’s spirit restricted to the place he died. Several other locations associated with him were likewise visited. The basements of clubs where the early Beatles cut their performing teeth; Abbey Road Studios, where the band made the majority of its records; several of his former homes.

He was a busy boy, too. According to a London medium named Rosemary Brown, Lennon not only appeared regularly to her, he also dictated new songs to her, with the request that she pass them on to his son Julian—at that time launching his own solo career—to record.

The ungrateful whelp never did. Presumably, Julian remained as unconvinced about the songs’ true provenance as everybody else who encountered them. But three of the dead Lennon’s alleged lyrics, “Look Beyond Today,” “Love Is All We Ever Need to Know” and “Just Turn Away,” were included in an appendix in Brown’s 1986 memoir, itself titled *Look Beyond Today*, together with some of Ms. Brown’s own firsthand experiences and recollections. Including her discovery that “he is taller than I always imagined him in this life.”

Elvis Lives

Lennon’s spirit, then, could be said to have continued as creative in death as it was in life, and he is not alone. The undisputed King of Rock ’n’ Roll, Elvis Presley, is said still to be turning up to perform at the Las Vegas Hilton, forty years after the establishment became a virtual home for him throughout the last years of his life.

There have been regular sightings of the King in both his regular clothes and his legendary white rhinestone suit, while he has also been sighted driving into the hotel in a gleaming red Cadillac. *Literally* driving into it. Like those ancient spirits that still use doors and passageways that have long since been removed, Elvis continues entering the Hilton through the private entrance that he had constructed there in 1970, but which was bricked up long ago.

Haunting the Vegas hotel where he spent so much of the seventies, Elvis's spirit still enters via the old, bricked-up entrance that had been designed for his use alone. The film *That's the Way It Is* (1970) features the King onstage in Vegas, still in corporeal form.

MGM/Photofest

Away from Vegas, Elvis understandably spends much of his time at Graceland, his legendary home in Memphis. There he peeps out of windows and doorways to baffle camera-wielding tourists or stands silently by his own grave, hands folded in front of him, eyes firmly affixed downward. As if he is still wondering how he ever wound up there.

In December 1980, however, he apparently traveled somewhat farther afield. That was when a passing truck driver swore that he had given the young Elvis a lift, after seeing him hitchhiking in his 1950s military uniform (Presley served two years in the US Army between 1958 and 1960). Not only that, but Elvis even sang to him as they drove.

On another occasion, in 1988, Elvis startled a tour group at Graceland by walking up behind them and demanding to know what they were doing in his home. Vouchsafed by no fewer than nine different people, this is the sighting that seems most irrefutably to suggest that, as the old saying used to go, Elvis Lives.

Other late performers walk the earth. Janis Joplin has been seen around the Hollywood hotel where she died; and Mama Cass Elliot likewise in the London apartment, 9 Curzon Place, where she passed away. Indeed, that particular flat, which was owned at the time by singer Harry Nilsson, is said to harbor a second spectacular specter. Four years after Mama Cass's demise,

Keith Moon, the mercurial drummer with the Who, died in the same bedroom.

With Nilsson, too, having now departed, one wonders what they all get up to when they're not busy haunting?

Down at the Crossroads

Not every ghost, of course, is who the witness thinks it is. The annals of ghost hunting abound with tales of, for example, George Washington being the resident spirit at such-and-such an inn, on the strength of a tradition that he spent a night there once . . . only for subsequent research to reveal that he never set foot in the place. Meaning, whoever the ghost actually was, it probably wasn't the First President.

Tommy Johnson suffers from much the same misidentification.

A scenario. You're walking down a deserted Mississippi lane at midnight, and a figure greets you from the crossroads. "Howdy, stranger," it says. (Or words to that effect.) "How would you like to play guitar like this?" And he peels off a lick and you know, you are in the presence of legend.

Robert Johnson was a fairly undistinguished bluesman who, it is said, traded his soul to the Devil at the crossroads, in return for stardom in the 1930s blues, and who died two years later (on the same day, thirty-nine years earlier, that Elvis would breathe his last). Ever since then, he has been hanging out at the same crossroads, hoping to meet someone who will exchange their soul for his and let him finally rest.

Except it wasn't Robert Johnson who actually made the fateful trade. It was Tommy.

Born in 1896 near Terry, Mississippi, Tommy Johnson had a voice like passing spirits and he played guitar like filigree lace, impossible intricacy woven round falsetto frailty. Still in his mid-teens, he was regularly to be found playing at local parties and dances with his brothers LeDell and Major, but he was also drinking heavily, and it was sometime around the end of the 1910s, or very early into the 1920s, that Tommy made the pact that dictated his career.

He rarely spoke of it. It was brother LeDell who let on that the Tommy Johnson who wrote the classics "Canned Heat" and "Cool Water Blues" . . . who played with Charley Patton and Papa Charlie McCoy . . . who was

known to play his instrument behind his head and between his legs, and who could toss it into the air and catch it without even missing a stroke, the Tommy Johnson who could do all that learned everything he knew from a stranger at the crossroads.

Prior to that, the story goes, he was merely a passing bluesman, no better or worse than any of his rivals, and there are multiple variations on the story of what happened next. The majority agree, however, that the crossroads Johnson had in mind already possessed a reputation of sorts. As indeed crossroads have done the Western world over, ever since the Romans took to placing statues of Hecate, Artemis and Demeter at the point where two roads or paths crossed and established them as a meeting place for both witches and the dead.

More recently, comparatively speaking, Washington Irving fastened sundry Massachusetts and New Hampshire regional legends together to create the 1824 story "The Devil and Tom Walker," with wily Tom making a pact with Satan, who was sitting on a stump at the time—and then besting the old Devil at story's end.

Tommy Johnson wasn't even the first person to have made the exchange in the annals of the blues. Clara Smith was singing "Done Sold My Soul to the Devil (And My Heart's Done Turned to Stone)" almost a decade earlier, in 1924. Johnson's heart didn't turn to stone. But a lifetime of alcohol didn't treat it any better. Tommy was playing at a party when he was felled by a massive heart attack in 1956, shortly after his sixtieth birthday.

But the booze that laid him low could not prevent him from being raised up again. Visit the crossroads at midnight tonight, and Tommy Johnson will be waiting for you; waiting to take you to the Devil, to try to trade your soul for his. Only he's not offering you anything in return, no fame, no fortune, no blues-playing brilliance. He just wants you to walk on up to the Devil and tell him, "Take me instead."

Maybe that's why he's been there for sixty-plus years and still no one has taken him up on his offer.

Or maybe it's because nobody is sure which crossroads he's actually waiting at. Because that was the one crucial element of the story that its tellers apparently forgot to report.

Tommy Johnson's ghost steps straight out of, and by its nature, invites us into, pure folklore of the American South. Indeed, the story itself has become

a livid example of folklore in motion, after the majority of the details were added onto the basic facts of *Robert* Johnson's life, in the mid-1960s. There they remained, tethered uneasily but irrevocably to such songs as "Me and the Devil Blues" for close to the next forty years, before being taken back for Tommy (or at least a namesake thereof) in the movie *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*

It is unfair, however, to subject any legend, be it a ghost story or otherwise, to the depths of scholarly investigation that have been applied to the Johnson story over the years. Literally reams of research have been devoted to Robert . . . somewhat less to Tommy . . . and the presence of the crossroads at the center of a lot of it ensures that we learn nothing fresh about the artist, while insights gained into the human condition—whatever it is in our own minds that renders us so susceptible to such stories—are scarcely hitherto undiscovered and undiscussed.

It is why ghost hunting television, with its constant drive to "debunk" the stories that it investigates, is ultimately the cultural equivalent of a chocolate teapot. It might be decorative, and it certainly fills a spot on the table. It has even been proven, under the correct conditions and after a lot of effort, to be fleetingly effective—in September 2014, chocolatiers at the Nestle Product Technology Centre, in York, England, actually succeeded in designing a chocolate teapot that could pour hot tea.

But it is utterly unfit for any conceivable, lasting purpose, and the notion that it might be is utterly laughable too. Ghost stories exist for one reason, and one reason alone—because, as Harry Price, English-born doyen of all ghost hunters, once remarked, "People don't want the debunk. They want the bunk."

Ghost Riders on the Storm

Which is why there are still so many people out there who don't believe that Doors singer Jim Morrison ever died; who remain convinced, forty-plus years after his death, that he simply kicked his fame and fortune in the head and disappeared to live his life afresh, far from the maddening crowd. When, in fact, his might be one of the best-attested ghost stories of the modern age.

The facts of Morrison's death, such as they are, appeared immutable. On the night of July 3, 1971, visiting Paris during a brief break from the Doors'

still lustrous career, Jim Morrison climbed into a warm bath. And he never climbed out again. On the morning of July 4, his body was discovered dead in the same, but now cold, water.

Wrapped in plastic and packed in dry ice, Morrison's body remained in the apartment where he died, while his girlfriend, Pamela Courson, made the funeral arrangements. According to one of Morrison's later biographers, she also slept alongside the corpse for the next three nights, before the undertakers finally delivered the coffin she had ordered, a *cercueil chene verni* that was the absolute cheapest available.

Why was he buried in France? Because, several days before his death, Morrison had visited Père Lachaise cemetery and, afterward, remarked that when he died, that was where he wished to be buried. This was arranged with the same haste as the rest of the affair and, on July 7, Morrison was laid to rest. His manager was present and a handful of others, but the service itself lasted just eight minutes. There was not even a priest in attendance.

This is where we move into uncharted territory. Celebrities had passed away before, and the world had mourned their passing. Just nine months before Morrison, Jimi Hendrix died. Little more than a year earlier, Rolling Stone Brian Jones. Janis Joplin was gone, and Canned Heat's Al Wilson.

And therein lay the difference. They died. Jim Morrison, on the other hand, *disappeared*. His bandmates received no confirmation whatsoever of the death until their manager returned to LA, and even he had no hard evidence to back up what he believed he had witnessed. He never saw the body; never even asked if he could. Igniting one of the most pernicious of all the subsequent rumors and legends surrounding Morrison's death, organist Ray Manzarek immediately demanded to know, "How do you even know he was in the coffin? How do you know it wasn't one hundred fifty pounds of fucking sand? We'll never know the real truth now. It's all gonna be rumors and stories from here on out."

He did not know just how accurate those words would prove.

Morrison, insisted the most widespread of the tales, was still alive. He had faked his death and gone off to live in obscurity somewhere secret. Which meant, when the visitations began, nobody ever claimed to have seen his ghost. They claimed to have seen *him*.

It remains one of the greatest *un*ghost stories ever told.

The first sightings were reported within days of his death becoming known.

Most were certainly mere misidentification; American singer-songwriter Elliott Murphy relocated to Paris that same summer, busking around the Metro, and he recalled, “There were so many guys who looked just like Morrison in his later bearded stage.”

But then the appearances spread out. Morrison appeared in San Francisco, and gave a Bank of America teller the thrill of his life by cashing some checks there. He spent some time in LA, hanging around the gay bars in full black leather. He was spotted in Tibet, living the life of a monk, and he was limping around the Australian outback with a badly broken leg.

He was in Africa, he was in Israel, and he was definitely in the American Midwest, where he developed a taste for dropping in on local radio stations in the early hours of the morning, secure in the knowledge that the only people listening would be a handful of insomniac truckers and the local hippy acid case who nobody would believe.

In other words, he comported himself in much the same manner as any number of other ghosts have been described as behaving—and he did so without *ever* being recorded as a ghost. To the people who saw him, he was real, he was Jim. Brilliant!

“The stories that Jim was alive didn’t surprise us at all,” Doors associate Danny Sugerman admitted, “because while he was alive, we kept hearing that he was dead. A car crash on Mulholland, or some sexual whatever and he’d gone out with a plastic bag on his head. He was one of those rock stars that people projected a lot of fantasies on, and they wanted him to fulfill them. And I think it’s part of normal human consciousness that we want our heroes to live forever.”

And whether they are alive or dead, we make certain that they do.

10

The Ghostly Gazetteer: Hawaii to Illinois

The Excessive Evil of Eerie Eclectics

A hovering woman has been seen emerging from an otherwise empty elevator on the seventeenth floor of the Ilihani Resort hotel in **Kapolei, Hawaii**.

In the years before the local high school was closed, students in **Hamakuapoko, Hawaii**, faced a spectral double jeopardy. Attend school, and they ran the risk of encountering the sobbing girl who haunted one of the restrooms. Play hooky, and they would surely meet the "choking ghosts" who lurked just off the campus and kept an evil eye out for anyone they suspected of skipping school.

A woman who drowned while trying to save her child from the sea can still be seen frantically running from the foundations of her former home, on Pounders Beach in **Kailua, Hawaii**.

The blond woman in the white dress, standing at one of the gates at **Honolulu** airport, is not awaiting an incoming passenger. Or, if she is, she's been waiting a long time; it's been decades since she waved her tourist lover off at the airport, in the belief that he'd be returning soon to marry her. He never has. Elsewhere in Honolulu, spectral soldiers still go about their business at Hickham Field . . . all apart from one, named Charley, who is a bit of a practical joker. And a young woman in a pink muumuu walks the Thomas Hale Hamilton Library.

Other **Honolulu** specters include a little girl killed while crossing the 16th Avenue Kaimuli Bridge, who still appears to passersby, asking if they can help her get home. And, on a regal note, Queen Lili'uokalani liked her cigars, and visitors to her former home, Iolani Palace, smell them still. Elsewhere in the palace, a piano plays itself in the Blue Room, and the old queen's bedroom unlocks itself at night.

The workmen demolishing the old homes that stood in the way of the University of Hawaii at **Hilo, Hawaii**, were obviously not paying attention when they tore down one particular house and killed the little boy who had once lived there, and who had returned to visit the old homestead one last time before it was demolished. He has not left since that time—his spirit still plays ball in the Hale Kanilehua dormitory.

With over three thousand graves cramming the Boot Hill Cemetery in **Idaho City, Idaho**, it is no surprise to learn that some of the pioneers and miners who built the original Gold Rush city are just a little restless.

A woman in white walks the popular fishing spot at Fort Hall Bottoms, in **Pingree, Idaho**.

The Old Idaho State Penitentiary in **Boise, Idaho**, is alive with flickering lights at night. Elsewhere in that same city, a ghostly miner and his spectral pack mules haunt the spot beside Loon Creek, where Manuel Sato was murdered in 1870 by a fugitive bank robber.

Hikers, farmers and cowboys lost in the wilds of **Owyhee County, Idaho**, have all reported sightings of a pack of phantom horses, who emerge from the clouds and lead them to safety. An especially reassuring presence in a region that is also known to be the hunting grounds of an army of cannibal dwarves.

Park your car and turn off the lights, and you can still see the shadow of the woman who hanged herself on the River Road Bridge in **Caldwell, Idaho**.

The sound of crying babies and despairing mothers rends the air at the Bear River Massacre Site in **Preston, Idaho**, the scene of one of the most

disgraceful days in all the annals of the US Cavalry.

The town park in **Potlatch, Idaho**, is home to the so-prosaically named Old Woman of Potlatch—an old woman who walks around the park searching for her former dwelling.

Another public space, Ammon Park in **Pocatello, Idaho**, has a haunted swing set, the favorite plaything of a little girl in a blue dress, out way past her bedtime.

Long-dead railroad workers returning to the lodgings from their shift are said still to visit the Cedar Inn in **Pierce, Idaho**. The demolition teams have taken out another of the Windy City's bloodiest scenes, the garage where Al Capone's orders saw the St. Valentine's Day Massacre played out. But gunfire and screams can still be heard there.

Lights flicker, and cries and other mysterious sounds are heard around the site, in **Des Plaines, Illinois**, where Flight 191 crashed and burned on May 25, 1979.

A student who hanged himself in the bell tower of McKendree University in **Lebanon, Illinois**, still frequents the uppermost stories of the building.

Spirit photographer William Hope gave new meaning to the phrase “I’ll be watching over you.”
Photo by William Hope/National Media Museum/Wikimedia Commons

The old Peoria State Hospital in **Bartonville, Illinois**, is another in that long and noble catalog of haunted lunatic asylums. Appropriately, the spirit—a trustee named Manuel A. Bookbinder—worked with the hospital’s burial crew, laying to rest his fellow inmates.

One of the most terrible maritime disasters ever to befall the Great Lakes happened, in fact, while the vessel was still at her moorings by the Clark Street Bridge in **Chicago, Illinois**. Over eight hundred passengers died when the steamer *Eastland* capsized, and their screams can still be heard from the bridge.

Trespassers beware—a phantom wolf patrols one of the cemeteries in **Taylorville, Illinois**.

A Jasmine Lady is among the spirits who have made their permanent home at the Mineral Springs Hotel in **Alton, Illinois**. A so-called Drunken Ghost is another, and then there’s George, who drowned in the hotel swimming pool

in the 1920s.

Renowned for its crazy architecture and the fact that there is not a single ninety-degree angle anywhere in its construction, the home built by the spiritualist George Stickney, in **Woodstock, Illinois**, is haunted not only by the spirits that were called to the house by its builder, but also by several of his children—out of ten, just three survived to adulthood.

11

Knock Knock—Who's There?

America's First Poltergeists

A remarkable occurrence, which attracted wide-spread interest, was connected with the family of John Bell, who settled near what is now Adams Station about 1804. So great was the excitement that people came from hundreds of miles around to witness the manifestations of what was popularly known as the "Bell Witch."

This witch was supposed to be some spiritual being having the voice and attributes of a woman. It was invisible to the eye, yet it would hold conversation and even shake hands with certain individuals. The freaks it performed were wonderful, and seemingly designed to annoy the family. It would take the sugar from the bowls, spill the milk, take the quilts from the beds, slap and pinch the children, and then laugh at the discomfiture of its victims.

At first it was supposed to be a good spirit, but its subsequent acts, together with the curses with which it supplemented its remarks, proved the contrary. A volume might be written concerning the performances of this wonderful being, as they are now described by contemporaries and their descendants. That all this actually occurred will not be disputed, nor will a rational explanation be attempted. It is merely introduced as an example of superstition, strong in the minds of all but a few in those times, and not yet wholly extinct.

—The Goodspeed brothers' *History of Tennessee*, 1886

The word *poltergeist* is a German construct which means, literally, noisy (from "poltern"—to make sound) ghost (geist), and the term first appeared the English language in 1848, in author Catherine Crowe's book *The Night Side of Nature; or Ghosts and Ghost-Seers*.

Crowe's book, although it certainly was not the first study of ghosts ever published, is often cited among the first to be written in "the modern age"—that is, with all the benefits of the enlightenment firmly entrenched in both her mind and the reader's.

Thus, she declared, "The only way . . . of attaining any glimpses of the truth in an enquiry of this nature, where our intellect can serve us so little, is to enter on it with the conviction that, knowing nothing, we are not entitled to reject any evidence that may be offered to us, till it has been thoroughly sifted, and proved to be fallacious.

"That the facts presented to our notice appear to us absurd, and altogether inconsistent with the notions our intellects would have enabled us to form, should have no weight whatever in the investigation. Our intellects are no measure of God Almighty's designs; and, I must say, that I do think one of the most irreverent, dangerous, and sinful things man or woman can be guilty of, is to reject with scorn and laughter any intimation which, however strangely it may strike upon our minds, and however adverse it may be to our opinions, may possibly be showing us the way to one of God's truths."

The Haunted Workshop

Crowe's poltergeist made its presence known to the Victorian actress Mary Anne Hunn, the mother of the English politician George Canning. She was visiting the naval city of Plymouth at the time and was in need of inexpensive lodgings. A friend came to the rescue, securing her rooms over a carpenter's store, which were indeed cheap, because they were allegedly haunted. Hunn, however, was not put off. How many haunted theaters had she appeared in over the years? More than she cared to count.

She was curious, however, as to how the spirit would manifest itself, so while the rest of the household settled itself down for the night, Hunn stayed awake, reading. And sure enough, the silence was soon broken by the sound of sawing. Followed by a veritable cacophony of other woodworking noises.

Convinced somebody was having a joke with her, she crept silently down the stairs to the workshop, from whence all the noise was coming. It was empty and, the moment she entered it, it fell silent.

She searched the room. It was deserted. She tested the tools. They were cold and unused. There was not a shred of evidence to suggest anyone, or

anything, had touched any of the tools since their rightful owners hung them up at the close of business that day. But within half an hour of Hunn returning to bed, the phantom woodworkers were again at work, banging and crashing.

Hunn finally fell asleep, but she resolved not to say anything to her hosts. Just in case she had imagined it. The following night, however, the performance resumed and so the next morning, she spoke to the owner, told him what she had heard—and was astonished to discover that he had never heard, or even heard tell of, such happenings in the past. He even agreed to keep vigil with her that night . . . only to flee in horror from the building, the moment the noises started up!

Hunn remained at the lodgings. The price was right and, she discovered, once she had accustomed herself to the nightly noises, and assured herself that the spirits were concerned only with that one downstairs room, she slept as soundly and undisturbedly as she could ever have hoped to. In fact, later she admitted to just one fear. That the noises should stop—because that would mean their creators were on the move. Heading for her own rooms, perhaps. . . .

So much for the first published poltergeist in the English language. Four years later, the term made its American debut in the pages of Adin Ballou's *An Exposition of Views Respecting Modern Spirit Manifestations*, published in Boston in 1852.

Ballou (1803–1890) himself was a fascinating chap, a pacifist, abolitionist and scholar who was also the founder of the utopian community of Hopedale, Massachusetts. Discussing both the cause and effect of supernatural manifestations throughout history and around the world, he wrote, "The Germans have long been familiar with a mischievous devil called the polter giest [*sic*], whose delight it appears to be to enter houses, and turn everything upside down, doing more mischief in an hour than a thousand monkeys would do in a day."

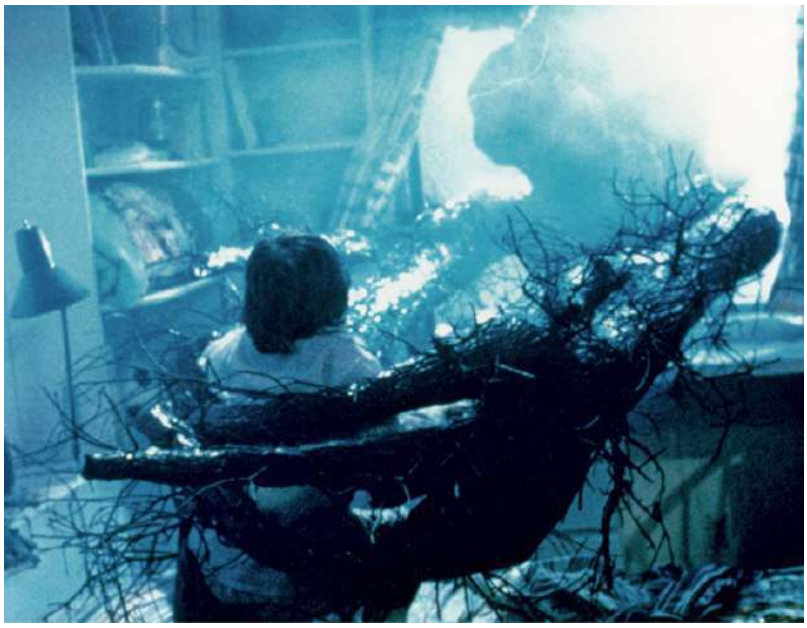
He was not impressed by the stories. "It is not well to listen to these things." He admitted that "some respectable witnesses have testified that this same monkey ghost has troubled several families in England and America within the few last years." But he was convinced that the spirit world in general . . . devolved in his view to the single field of "rappomania," on account of the then-rising tide of spiritualist beliefs . . . "is, to a certain extent,

a humbug, like phrenology, mesmerism, biology, etherology, electrical psychology, and other kindred ologies."

> Certainly, all of them afford facts which are worth the serious notice of metaphysicians. They may occasion the revival of a dispute, which raged four hundred years ago, as to whether—the old distinction of *spiritus, anima et corpus*, spirit, soul and body, a trinity which is unity in man, be not better than the dualism which, since Descartes, has been received in the schools.
>
> But these ologies afford the means of getting bread and butter, and so, lazy charlatans profess to be phrenologists, biologists, and so on. Ghosts are raised for the moderate charge of twenty-five cents, and, after hearing what ghost No. 1 has to say, rap, or write, for another twenty-five cents one can get another, or, perhaps, the same ghost to contradict all that was said, rapped, or written by ghost No. 1. Yankees who are capable of making wooden seeds, vegetables, hams, and dollar clocks, could not fail to perceive the peculiar money coining facilities afforded by the ologies, ghostology, or rappomania included.

A haughty dismissal, then. But, also perhaps, an incautious one. The fifteenth-century religious reformer Martin Luther spoke of poltergeists and, some two centuries later, a haunting in Dortmund, Germany, was detailed in a pamphlet titled *Gespentes und Polter-Geists*, and drew a very firm line not only between charlatanry and reality, but also between regular ghosts and their destructive cousins.

For poltergeists *are* destructive. English ghost hunter Harry Price, describing their breed in his 1945 book *Poltergeists over England*, declared, "the poltergeist is mischievous, destructive, unhelpful, malicious, audacious, teasing, ill-disposed, spiteful, ruthless, resourceful and vampiric. A ghost *haunts*; a poltergeist *infests*. A ghost likes solitude; a poltergeist prefers company. A ghost seeks the half-light; a poltergeist will 'perform' in sunlight."



A scene from the 1982 movie *Poltergeist* (with Oliver Robins shown from behind)—although, in truth, you don't even need to mention the film's name. Just sing out, "They're back!"

MGM/UA/Photofest

To this catalog of misbehavior can be added the poltergeist's penchant for spontaneous fires, pools of water, icy breezes, violent assaults, graffiti, electrical malfunction and failure, flying objects, broken crockery, falling pictures, slamming doors, opening drawers . . . anything and everything, in fact, that will disturb the peace of the household. And for what reason? Apparently, for fun.

Theories do abound, of course, particularly once it was realized that the majority of poltergeist incidents occur in households where an adolescent child, and usually a girl, is resident. As early as the 1930s, psychologist Nandor Fodor was suggesting that poltergeists are an outward manifestation of either repressed anger or frustrated sexual desire.

This, perhaps, is why the poltergeist is very much the best known of all the different species of ghost—because it demands attention, and generally receives it. Nothing gets the tabloid press more excited than a good, violent poltergeist haunting; nothing makes for a more thrilling movie, nor a more successful one, as the 1982 epic *Poltergeist* proved.

The twentieth scariest film ever made, according to the Chicago Film Critics' Association, and one of the American Film Institute's one hundred most frightening movies from the first century of motion pictures, *Poltergeist*

was also responsible for one of the most familiar of all filmic quotations . . . repeated, of course, in the slightly tremulous tones of a little girl. “They’re baaaaaack.”

Naturally (or, at least, as naturally as Hollywood realities ever can be) the haunted house was built on what had once been a cemetery. We should not, however, mock *Poltergeist* for adhering so fervently to so many of the genre’s clichés—and not only because, were we to time travel back to 1982, we would realize that the movie invented many of the clichés in the first place.

Reality has forced just as many poltergeists into the realms of popular culture as the movies and television. In the United Kingdom, the Enfield and South Shields poltergeists continue to haunt the national imagination long after the hauntings themselves ended.

The Roman historian Livy referred to repeated showers of stones that frightened the Romans during the Second Punic War (218–201 BCE); the first-century historian Flavius Josephus described an exorcism that itself followed what could have been a visit from a poltergeist.

The Curé of Ars, St. Jean Baptiste Vianney, suffered the attentions of what we would now call a poltergeist for a staggering *thirty-five* long years, during which he experienced the full range of poltergeist tricks, from mysterious knockings and the moving of furniture, to violent attacks on the walls of his room, and on to a physical assault upon his own person, lying in his bed while the poltergeist pushed it around the room.

In Iceland in the year 1000, a poltergeist took it upon itself to rip freshly caught fish to pieces. In Wales, around 1190, one Stephen Wiriet was haunted by a spirit that would confront guests and visitors with tales of their past misdeeds. There was another violent stone thrower in Paris in 1447, while the Scots folklorist Andrew Lang, writing in 1894, recorded a tale whose printed history could be traced back to 1528.

“It is stated that on March 21, the spirit of Sister Alix de Telieux [a nun who had previously fled the convent, broken her vows and eventually died in miserable poverty in 1524] struck thirty-three great strokes on the refectory of her convent, ‘mighty and marvellous,’ implying that her thirty-three years of purgatory were commuted into thirty-three days. A bright light, scarcely endurable, then appeared, and remained for some eight minutes. The nuns then went into chapel and sang a Te Deum.”

These are not isolated cases. The chronicles of medieval Europe are littered with similar incidents, ascribed either by contemporary or modern researchers to poltergeist activity, and some truly notable cases rose.

In England in 1661, for example, all who heard of it were transfixed by the tale of the Tedworth Drummer, in which a drum belonging to an imprisoned beggar started playing itself, accompanied by the hurling around of furniture, the shifting and lifting of beds (usually while they were still occupied), mysterious scratching sounds and much more.

Furthermore, while poltergeists are traditionally regarded as invisible agencies, there are those instances where they have manifested as the most astonishing creatures. Harry Price even investigated, and many people remain convinced by, one that haunted a home on the Isle of Man in the early 1930s, and which took the form of a mongoose. A *talking* mongoose whose name was Gef.

The Falling Stones

The first American poltergeist of which we have any kind of evidence was recorded in New Castle, New Hampshire, in 1682. One morning the Walton family awoke to the sound of what they thought was a rainstorm. Looking out, however, they realized that the sky was cloudless and the ground was dry. What they were hearing was not rain, but stones, hundreds and hundreds of stones, literally pouring from the sky onto their roof and their property.

Some of the stones were tiny, some were huge, large enough to cause considerable damage to anything, or anyone, they might hit. But as shocking as that discovery was, it was nothing compared to the terror that awaited when the family realized that the stones were not only falling out of doors. They were falling *inside* the house as well, as though the roof and the ceilings were not even there. As the family stood and watched, stones piled onto the floor of the house several inches deep.

The storm, if such a word was even remotely appropriate, did not stop. Days turned to weeks and the stones continued their relentless fall. In England, around the same time, an otherwise forgotten pamphleteer conjured the word “lithobolia,” to describe such outbreaks of spiritual stone throwing. And that is what the Waltons were faced with. A wild and uncontrollable outbreak of lithobolia.

The family swept the house clean, and barely was the last stone out of the room than it would have filled with fresh ones. They locked the doors and went to stay with friends and relatives. The stones followed them. George Walton, the head of the household, took a handful of stones, painted them and locked them away. Hours later those same painted stones fell again from the unforgiving heavens.

There was no explanation that could be offered. The secretary of the colony of New Hampshire, Richard Chamberlain, visited the house and watched, perplexed, as the stones fell. Other officials visited, and learned men and scientists, too. None could explain the phenomenon. An old woman was arrested and accused of witchcraft, but there was no evidence against her, or proof that she had any more idea of what was happening than the learned men who accused her in the first place. She was released without charge and when the stones suddenly stopped falling one day, after months of relentless precipitation, there was no explanation for that, either.

Inexplicable stone falls remain one of the most common threads in early tales that we now consider to be poltergeist related, although the arrest of the local witch reminds us that different eras offered up different explanations.

In seventeenth-century New Hampshire, a witch *was* the most likely culprit. In nineteenth-century Louisiana, voodoo would usually be blamed. Doctor John, a prominent practitioner in New Orleans (and from whom the modern performer Dr. John took his stage name), was at the center of several incidents that involved showers of stones, and the strange thing is, he could usually cause them to end. Provided he was offered enough money to propitiate the spirits. On one occasion, in 1867, a Mr. Samuel Wilson paid the Doctor $62 to put an end to a particularly ferocious stone storm. He then sued him for the money's return. The Doctor repaid the sum and, just days later, the hail of stones returned.

The Bloody Visage

In reality, of course, showers of stones are simply one of the weapons at the poltergeist's disposal—and, no matter how annoying or damaging it might be, they are ultimately one of the least impressive. Anyone with a good hiding place (and a decent supply of stones) can rain projectiles onto another person. It takes a remarkable spirit indeed to conjure up the terrors and

torments that so seriously benighted a family on Telegraph Hill, San Francisco, in the summer of 1862.

According to an account published in the *San Francisco Bulletin* that July, an English-born stevedore, his wife, two children and his stepdaughter by a previous marriage were living together in apparent harmony in a house on Kearny Street. One evening while the parents were out, the children were astonished to see a woman in black walk into the house, through the rooms, and into their parents' bedroom, where she lay down on the bed.

Alarmed by such strange behavior, but thinking it was nothing more *than* strange behavior . . . a friend of their mother's, perhaps . . . the children ran to fetch their father but, by the time they returned, the visitor had vanished. A few days later, however, the woman returned and, this time, the children got a closer look at her. The woman's face, they declared, was just a bloody mask.

Even more terrifyingly, the children's parents were home that day and they saw nothing. Not until the figure again lay on the bed, and a great red stain spread out across the white pillowcase. The woman herself remained invisible to the horrified adults. All they saw was the blood.

There was no room to doubt that something both singular and inexplicable had occurred, because from that night on, the house knew no peace. Furniture would be moved and broken, dishes and pottery was hurled and smashed. The eldest daughter was regularly pinched and slapped, and scratches on her face drew blood more often than not. When the mother of the household, exasperated by the damage, declared that the guilty party should "go to the old fish"—essentially meaning, "go jump in a lake"—she found herself lifted bodily, heavy armchair and all, and carried across the room.

Finally the family could take no more abuse. They fled, moving to a house on nearby Montgomery Street. The woman in black followed them. A few days later, while the eldest daughter was visiting a neighbor, she was assaulted by the apparition there, too, flinching in pain in full view of several onlookers, while bloody finger marks appeared on her cheek. The neighbor wiped the blood away—and was herself struck by the same unseen assailant!

Reports on the story seem to end there. As we have seen before, newspapers of the era are a great source for the beginning of a ghost story, but not so good at supplying the ending. But there is no wonder in that. There were so many ghost stories to be reported, it would have been hard for anyone to keep track of them.

An equally perplexing case was reported in the *New York Sun* on September 1, 1885.

> Old Stratford, the whitewashed town between this place and Bridgeport, made famous by mysterious "rappings" many years ago, and more recently celebrated as the scene of poor Rose Clark Ambler's strange murder, is much concerned over a house which the almost universal verdict pronounces "haunted."
>
> The family of Elihu Osborn lives in this house, and ghosts have been clambering through it lately in a wonderfully promiscuous fashion. Two or three families were compelled to vacate the premises before the Osborns, proud and skeptical, took possession of them.
>
> Now the Osborns are hunting for a new home. Children of the family have been awakened at midnight by visitors which persisted in shaking them out of bed; Mrs. Osborn has been confronted with ghostly spectacles, and through the halls and vacant rooms strange footsteps are frequently heard when all the family are trying to sleep; sounds loud enough to arouse every member of the household. Then the manifestations sometimes change to moanings and groanings sufficiently vehement and pitiful to distract all who hear them.
>
> Once upon a time, perhaps a dozen years ago, Jonathan Riggs lived in this house, and as the local gossips assert, Riggs caused the death of his wife by his brutal conduct and then swallowed poison to end his own life. The anniversary of the murderous month in the Riggs family has arrived and the manifestations are so frequent and so lively that "the like has never been seen before," as is affirmed by a veteran Stratford citizen. There is no shadow of doubt in Stratford that the spirits of the Riggses are spryly cavorting around their former abode.

Both of these cases, it might be said, adhere to what we have come to describe as "traditional" poltergeist behavior, at the same time, however, as they remind us that such an event does not actually know "traditional" bounds. That the only thing that can truly be expected from a poltergeist is . . . the unexpected. A remarkable occurrence. And as remarkably as the Telegraph Hill events unfolded, even more so were those that took place on a Tennessee farm in 1817, and which have become known to history as,

simply, the Bell Witch Haunting.

The Bell Witch Haunting

Much of what we know about the case was the work of one Martin Van Buren Ingram, writing his *An Authenticated History of the Bell Witch* in 1894 and apparently drawing his information from an unpublished (and subsequently lost) manuscript written by one Richard Bell, a child in the household at the time of the haunting. *My Family's Troubles*, as Bell titled his writings, was penned close to a quarter of a century after the haunting, and so much of what he (and, therefore, Ingram) set down has to be viewed with some reservations.

At the same time, however, if one had lived through a series of events as incredible as this, would any of it be something one easily forgot? And would there be any need to exaggerate or invent?

The Bell farm lay in what is now Adams, Tennessee, today just about an hour north of Nashville, but at the time as isolated as it could be, a hamlet on the banks of the Red River, and notable only the foundation of the first Baptist Church west of the Cumberland Mountains, the Red River Church, in 1791.

The Bell family arrived there in the early 1800s from North Carolina, settling in the hamlet of Red River. An already sizable property when he purchased it, Bell quickly acquired more land, ultimately increasing his holdings to 328 acres. He became an elder at the church, and, by 1817, the family had grown to embrace three sons (including Richard) and a daughter.

It was as Bell was walking through one of his outlying fields one day that he spotted a most peculiar creature eyeing up the corn. It possessed, he said, the body of a dog but the head of a rabbit, but the shots that he fired at it all seemed to miss, so he went home none the wiser as to what it was.

It was that same evening that the disturbances commenced. First, a banging on the outside walls of their cabin. But then the banging came inside and was accompanied by unseen hands pulling at the bedclothes. They heard whispering, the sound of an old woman singing hymns to herself, and these too grew louder, accompanied by snatches of scripture and then full conversations with members of the family.

The spirit took an especial dislike to Betsy, the Bell's daughter, frequently

attacking her and, when it discovered that she was courting a neighbor, Joshua Gardner, it apparently set its heart upon breaking them up. Which it succeeded in doing, simply by making certain that they were never, ever alone. At the same time, however, it could also show some mercy; when Betsy fell ill, the unseen presence apparently took to bringing fresh fruit to the girl's bedside.

The passage of time has added further details, including a decidedly unconvincing (and modern) subplot that places Betsy and her father in an incestuous relationship. It probably worked as a selling point for the movie *An American Haunting* with Donald Sutherland and Sissy Spacek, but again, the story in its original form was sensational enough that it scarcely needed such sordid embellishments.

Word of the haunting spread, and with it, the assumption that the spirit was that of old Kate Batts, a former neighbor of the Bells. The two neighbors had long been locked in conflict over the rights to a certain piece of land, and Batts had enjoyed a certain reputation locally. It took very little effort for the locals to advance her first to the status of wicked witch, and then to that of vengeful poltergeist.

Visitors to the farm were not spared the spirit's attentions, and legend insists that some increasingly powerful and influential personages spent time in Adams, drawn to the hamlet by word of the haunting. The future president Andrew Jackson, a Tennessee resident, is numbered among those who came to rubberneck and experience for themselves the attentions of the Bell Witch, and he was not disappointed. Apparently his horses refused to approach the house.

"It's the witch!" cried Jackson, at which point a female voice spoke out of nowhere, telling him that his party could proceed, but that she would see them again later that evening. The horses immediately set off again.

But neither the great nor the good, nor a seemingly endless parade of holy men, could dissuade the spirit from its awful purpose.

The spirit's favorite victim was John Bell, or "Old Jack Bell," as it referred to him. At every opportunity, the spirit would talk about how it intended to kill him, and the precise methods by which it would do so. It beat him regularly and inflicted all manner of dreadful sufferings on him—one particular attack saw the poor man's tongue swell so much that he could barely breathe, speak or swallow.

When he did finally die, a few days before Christmas 1820, the family spoke of the mysterious bottle of liquid that they found beside his bed, where he normally kept his medicine. One of Bell's sons, John Junior, apparently put a little of the liquid down for the family cat—who tasted it and promptly dropped dead on the spot. Horrified, John hurled the bottle onto the fire, and when the Bell Witch was confronted, she cackled happily, "I gave Ol' Jack a big dose of that last night, which fixed him!"

Needless to say, the bottle and its contents had been completely consumed by the flames before anyone suggested having it examined for poison.

The haunting ended there. The spirit would make one final grand appearance, and then it would vanish from the family's life forever. As John Bell's funeral wound down, and the family filed away from the cemetery, the entity gave a sudden loud laugh and then broke into a song about a bottle of brandy. She continued singing until the last mourner left the graveyard, and then she fell silent forever.

The Bell Witch haunting remains America's best-known poltergeist, but only because it has been so frequently retold. Numerous others, equally remarkable, have been recorded over the years since then, each of them in its own way as perplexing as the Tennessee events. Of course, the crowning fatality does raise the Bell Witch above those others—few hauntings anywhere in the modern world have ended as tragically and mysteriously as this particular saga. But the preceding events established a pattern that countless subsequent ghost hunters would instantly, and intimately, recognize.

A Connecticut Conundrum

In March 1850, a little over three decades after the Tennessee haunting, an equally mysterious series of disturbances came to visit the town of Stratford, Connecticut, and specifically the Elm Street mansion that was the dwelling of the Presbyterian reverend Eliakim Phelps.

Built earlier in the century by an eccentric sea captain named George R. Dowell, the house was laid out almost identically to the clipper ship that Dowell had once captained. It was a beautiful and impressive home and Phelps, newly remarried to a younger woman with three children of her own, two girls and a boy, deemed it ideal for the new life he intended making.

The Phelpses arrived in Stratford in 1848 and soon had a child of their own. But their outward happiness was deceptive. Mrs. Phelps hated the small-town obsessions of Stratford life and so, it seemed, did their eldest daughter, Anna. Always a nervous child, Anna now seemed to exist in a state of permanent upset. Seasoned poltergeist watchers will already know what that means.

One evening in early March, one of Phelps's old friends came to visit, and in the course of the evening's conversation, they fell to discussing Spiritualism . . . Adin Ballou's rappomania. Neither man had any strong feelings one way or the other about it, but they decided to stage a séance, just to see what happened.

Nothing. A few random knocks, some vague rapping sounds. Nothing to persuade them that the spirit world had paid the slightest attention to their séance, and the ritual was forgotten almost as soon as it was finished. It was only later that Phelps found himself wondering whether something had been attracted by the séance after all.

That Sunday, the family returned from church to discover the house doors had been flung wide open, despite Phelps having locked them himself when they departed. All the doors, inside and out, and all the windows, too. The furniture was in disarray, possessions strewn across the floor. But nothing was missing, there was no sign of robbery.

They soon found themselves wishing there had been. For what they did discover, upstairs in one of the bedrooms, was utterly chilling. A nightgown had been laid on the bed. A pair of stockings had been placed at its hem, as if to represent legs, and the arms . . . the arms were crossed on the nightgown's chest, as though the wearer was deceased and was now being laid out for burial.

A portent of doom? A dreadful prediction? The most levelheaded soul on earth would have difficulty expelling all of those suspicions, and as they tidied the house as best they could, the family's chatter would have been dominated by false gaiety.

The entire family were expected to return to the church for the afternoon services, but Mr. Phelps remained behind, hidden in one of the rooms with a gun. No matter how bizarre the state of the house, and how nervous his family, he was convinced that it was the work of burglars who perhaps had been disturbed before they had commenced their actual burgling. Thinking the house empty, he hoped they might return.

They did not, however, and finally Phelps decided to leave his hiding place and check some of the other rooms. Which is when he discovered the dining room to be filled with eleven women, silently standing, seated and kneeling, some clearly praying, others studying Bibles.

Not one of them had made a sound as she entered the house; not one of them made a sound now. And not one of them was human. All, the astonished Phelps realized, had been created from the family's own wardrobe, dresses stuffed with rags and other clothing, and each of them created and posed while he lay in silent ambush just a room away.

Utterly perplexed, Phelps tidied away this bizarre tableau and the house remained silent for the rest of that day and evening. The following morning, however, the entire family witnessed the many and varied contents of the house begin raising themselves from their customary places and fly around the room. An umbrella shot twenty-five feet across the floor. Cutlery, books, ornaments and pens seemed to possess minds of their own. Bedding tore itself off the beds and distributed itself around the house. All morning and afternoon, the house was in a state of constant chaos; only as evening fell did things quiet down, and then the respite was only temporary. The following morning, it all began again.

Phelps contacted one of his friends, a retired minister named Reverend John Mitchell; he arrived at the house and watched in amazement as the turmoil continued unabated. But he was also convinced that this was no supernatural agency at work. Either the household maid, or the children, were to blame, playing tricks and growing more and more rambunctious as they saw the effect it was having on the adults. At Mitchell's suggestion, all were sent to stay at a neighbor's house, leaving just the three adults at the Elm Street mansion.

The three adults, and whatever it was that was still hurling the family's possessions around the house, mindless of the children's absence.

Day after day, the Phelpses would tidy the house; day after day, their mystery visitor would then untidy it again. The bizarre theater of pious women reappeared, sometimes doubling, sometimes almost tripling in number. "In a short space of time," the *New Haven Journal* reported, "so many figures were constructed that it would not have been possible for a half a dozen women, working steadily for several hours, to have completed their design, and arrange the picturesque tableau. Yet these things happened in a

short space of time, with the whole house on the watch.” On one occasion, no fewer than thirty shockingly lifelike mannequins were arrayed in exquisite poses under the family’s very noses.

Some of the manifestations were so mundane as to be almost laughable. A potato appeared on the breakfast table, where no potato had been before. Others baffled by their sheer impossibility. Items placed in securely locked rooms upstairs fell to the floor at the family’s feet. Sometimes, ornaments or vases would race across the room as though hurled; other times, they would move so slowly it was as if an unseen hand was carefully carrying them, fearful lest they stumble and drop them. And all of this witnessed by a veritable army of visitors, skeptics, investigators and mere curiosity-seekers, drawn to the house as word of the haunting spread, all of them certain that the Phelpses were somehow responsible for what was happening. And not one of them capable of explaining how.

Phelps’s son from his first marriage, Austin, a professor at Andover Theological Seminary; and his brother Abner, a Massachusetts legislator, were among those convinced that some form of trickery was involved. Neither had approved of Phelps’s second marriage and they were doubtless certain that the wife was somehow behind the haunting. That is until, bent on catching the prankster who kept banging on the front door, they took up positions on either side of it—and the banging hammered on regardless.

The activity continued. Silverware was bent and twisted, windows shattered, effigies appeared, objects flew. But the haunting was no longer content with inanimate object. Anna was a regular target for vicious slaps and pinches; on one occasion, she awoke in the night to discover a pillow had been taped to her face, as if to suffocate her.

Henry, the son, was regularly thrown from his bed or pelted with stones. A number of witnesses were there the day that he was raised so high off the ground that his head touched the ceiling—and then released, to plunge back to the ground. Another time the boy disappeared from the house, to be found much later on, tied up in a tree in the yard.

But perhaps a pattern was emerging. On other occasions still, he suffered burns, a ducking in a cistern of water, and an apparent hanging attempt—attacks that put some observers in mind of the traditional means of detecting and punishing witches.

Local tradition had it that one Goody Bassett had been hanged close to the

house in 1651—that is, exactly two centuries previous—and that it was she who was behind the attacks. But when the Reverend Mitchell attempted to communicate with the spirit, it offered no clue as to its identity, and that despite going through a phase of active letter writing. Apparently, it wrote nothing of interest—or so Dr. Phelps said, when asked why he destroyed each letter as soon as it was found.

A séance had better results, conjuring a spirit who claimed to be a tormented soul enduring the tortures of Hell as a consequence of a sinful life. But when Dr. Phelps asked if there was anything he could do to help, the spirit asked for nothing more than a piece of pumpkin pie; and when Phelps, thinking he must have misheard, asked again, it requested a glass of gin.

Finally, Phelps asked the spirit why it was behaving as it did. Clearly of a similar mind to the Enfield poltergeist of a century-plus later, which claimed it tormented its visitors for the sheer joy of annoying them, the Phelpses' visitor seems to have considered the question and then given the answer most guaranteed to infuriate.

"For fun," it replied.

The family could take no more. As fall approached, Phelps made plans for them to return to Philadelphia, closing up the Stratford house until the following spring. They would then take fresh stock of the situation and, sure enough, when they returned early in the summer, the house remained calm. The spirit would never be seen or heard of again.

The Talladega Fire Raiser

Not all haunts are so readily ended. Indeed, not all haunts remain confined to just the single dwelling, or a single family (as the Waltons of seventeenth-century New Castle discovered).

One day in August 1958, on the outskirts of Talladega, Alabama, a small fire broke out in a four-room log tenant house occupied by the Tuck family of two adults and six children. It was quickly extinguished—and another broke out. And another and another, seventeen in one day alone, a total of twenty-two in just a matter of days, and almost every single one of them igniting high up in the walls, closer to the ceiling than the floor.

There the flames burned not with the familiar red and orange that was the color of blazing wood and plaster, but with a bluish hue, a fearful glow that

some say was more akin to sulphur than to any regular conflagration, but which might also have another explanation. One that lends further credence to the notion that the family was being haunted by a ghost.

In sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England, and beyond to the American colonies, there was a fervent belief that the presence of a ghost caused candles and other naked flames to burn blue. Neither was this a passing fancy; indeed, it was common enough to merit mention by Shakespeare in *Richard III* (written around 1592), when the arrival of the ghosts is heralded by the king declaring “the lights burn blue.” Similarly, Daniel Defoe recorded attending a party at which a distinct blue tinge to the candles caused great alarm among his fellow guests, while a servant cried out, “I think the Devil is in the candles tonight!”

Ghosts or sulphur, whatever it might be, fire investigators were flummoxed. The house was without electricity, so there was no possibility that it was a wiring problem, while the fact that they ignited so far above the ground seemed to discount any possibility of accidental ignition from cooking, heating or even smoking.

Even more confounding, several of the fires were actually seen to ignite by Talladega County road commissioner Leslie Hutto and a local contractor, Ortis Horton. Both, when questioned about what they had seen, were adamant that nothing had occurred to ignite the flames. They just flared up without warning.

Word of the mystery was quick to spread through the community, and the flames continued to burn, even with the local press, the fire department and various onlookers gathered outside the already all-but-gutted house. The Tuck family was relocated to another house nearby—and, within hours, four fires had broken out there as well. A fifth destroyed the property moments after the Tucks departed it for the last time, to move in with a relative, Darnell Suttle.

Five fires later, Suttle would certainly have been regretting his generosity, but any suspicion that the Tucks were in any way responsible for the awful misfortunes that were pursuing them were laid to rest when the police came to visit them at their new address. In full view of everybody, a quilt hanging in the backyard exploded into flame. Two further fires, involving a curtain and a loaf of bread, broke out after the police had departed.

On September 2, the Tucks moved on, this time to Calvin Tuck’s father’s

home. Buckets and bowls of water were placed in every room; any receptacle capable of holding liquid was pressed into service. Calvin even consulted an herb doctor, and when the man diagnosed a voodoo hex that had been placed on the Tuck family, Calvin readily purchased the remedy—a medicine comprising a half pint of vinegar, two gourd seeds, two six-penny nails, three straight pins and a mule biscuit, poured into a bottle and buried upside down.

It didn't work. Seven fires in a day proved that, and another the following afternoon, igniting in the presence of the chief of police Leon Curlee and the state fire marshall Frank Craven. That night, there were five more.

The Tucks moved on again, this time departing Talladega altogether. Now they were in Anniston, some twenty miles away, staying with a friend. Whose house promptly caught fire.

This time, however, the police were waiting. Privately convinced that there was no possible explanation beyond arson, they arrested Calvin Tuck on a vagrancy charge and put him in jail "for his own protection."

"There's no such thing as magic fires," Talladega fire chief W. C. Holmes told the media. "Those fires are being caused by something or somebody. There's nothing to it except that somebody is setting those fires. I don't know who, but I know someone is. They're putting something on the articles and then applying enough heat to ignite it."

But who and what? No matter how thoroughly the fire scenes were investigated, nothing even remotely suspicious was turned up. Theories ranging from a fly sprayer filled with gasoline to the liberal distribution of phosphorous were aired, but all were disproved. Tuck was released without charge, but he would have to have been freed regardless. The fires blazed on even as he sat in a cell.

Another tack was taken. Forget the how, just find out who. In late September, the police announced that the mystery had been solved by the confession of nine-year-old Calvin Tuck Jr. He had been playing with matches and it was he who started the fires. All fifty-two of them. Including the ones where he was not in the room, or even in the house. Including the ones that the police and firemen had witnessed igniting out of nowhere. All of them.

It was a weak story and the media was not biting. No firebug, least of all a nine-year-old boy, could be so circumspect and skilled as to be responsible for all of the blazes, and when the police came up with what they said was his

method . . . smoldering rags, in the hands of an arsonist skilled enough to know exactly how long it would take those rags to actually burst into flame . . . even they didn’t seem to believe that one.

The case was closed, but only because the fires stopped breaking out. And that, we can only assume, was because the real fire starter had decided to stop setting them. And had moved on to some other kind of haunting, someplace else.

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The Ghostly Gazetteer: Indiana to Iowa

A Fulsome File of Fearful Figures

A gateway to another dimension was allegedly opened when a group of curious teenagers staged a séance at the Ceylon Covered Bridge in **Geneva, Indiana**. The first indication that all was not well came when a dead body fell to the ground with sufficient force that a massive bloodstain spread out within the pentagram the teens had drawn. Years later, all manner of strange occurrences are likewise attributed to the events of that evening.

The spirit of auto pioneer Clement Studebaker is seen and heard moving around his former home, the Studebaker Mansion, in **South Bend, Indiana**. Another homeowner who has proven reluctant to leave is James Allison, namesake of a fine mansion in **Indianapolis, Indiana**.

A little boy was killed when a stunt went wrong during a Wild West show at the Guyer Opera House in **Lewisville, Indiana**, in the early 1900s. He still plays in the auditorium today.

A headless construction worker paces the Tunnelton Tunnel in **Bedford, Indiana**, searching for his own head amid all the bones and body parts that tumbled into the tunnel works when construction disturbed a hitherto unknown cemetery, killing several workers and, indeed, decapitating one.

A Revolutionary War soldier named Nathan Hinkle will answer you if you speak his name while walking around his grave in Bethel Cemetery, **Shelburn, Indiana**.

A fireman haunts the **Indianapolis** Athletic Club, still frantically attempting to rouse sleepers in the middle of the night, as he replays a fatal fire of 1992.

Switch on a certain blue table lamp in the Story Inn, in **Nashville, Indiana**, and the ghost of a pretty young lady will appear.

In 1881, a mummified hand, probably belonging to a young female victim of the sinking of the *United States* steamboat on the Ohio River in 1868, was discovered on the shorefront in **Dillsboro, Indiana**. It became a family heirloom (!) until the night when a one-handed female spirit appeared in the new owner's home and demanded its immediate return. The hand was buried and the ghost never returned.

"If you can dream it, build it." Salisbury House in Des Moines, Iowa, was built as an idealized replica of a true English country mansion. Building materials and furnishings were all pinpointedly accurate—but did they import a traditional English country haunting as well?

Photo by Dave Thompson

A somewhat lascivious spook haunts the elevator at the Jefferson County Library in **Madison, Indiana**, caressing and stroking any unaccompanied women who also take the car.

A terrible train crash that killed a wagon full of orphans in the 1920s has left its living mark on Iron Hill, in **Charles City, Iowa**.

Voices, footsteps and shadows are all to be seen and heard at the old Masonic Temple in **Davenport, Iowa**.

The Franciscan convent in **Earling, Iowa**, was the site of a marathon exorcism in 1928, and episodes from the three-week battle are still replayed there today.

Iowa State University benefactor C. Y. Stephens is often to be seen seated at the back of a balcony in the auditorium that bears his name.

The J. L. Reece Memorial Park in **New Providence, Iowa**, is visited by a young woman who committed suicide there.

Mossy Glen Hollow, near **Strawberry Point, Iowa**, is haunted by a man who committed suicide by walking into the bog.

The ragged figure of a beggar, or hobo, walks the campus of Drake University in **Des Moines, Iowa**, seeking a lawyer who will represent him in a case of misapplied justice.

The Villisca Axe Murder House in **Villisca, Iowa** . . . unsurprisingly . . . is haunted by the victims of a horrific axe murder that took place there in 1912. Surprisingly, on the other hand, stories of the haunting did not really get going until the first paranormal investigators dropped by in 1999—since when the house's reputation has soared. It most recently hit the headlines in November 2014 when another investigator was hospitalized with multiple stab wounds, self-inflicted at the exact same time as the original murders were believed to have taken place, 12:45 a.m.

An electrician killed during the building of the **Sioux City, Iowa**, Municipal Auditorium in the 1940s still plays with the lights today.

Keep your windows firmly closed as you cross the Barnwell Bridge in **Barnum, Iowa**. Otherwise, your car may be hijacked by the disembodied head of a woman who killed herself and her three children by suspending them all from the top of the bridge, to be killed by an oncoming train.

Buddy Holly died in February 1959, but he lives on at the site of his death, in **Clear Lake, Iowa**, where a memorial was raised in the footprint of the devastating fatal plane crash. Oddly, encore appearances by Ritchie Valens and the Big Bopper, fellow passengers aboard the doomed aircraft, have not been reported.

A little boy will tug at your clothing in Room Five of the historic Mason Inn and Caboose Cottage in **Keosauqua, Iowa**. And in Room Seven, a murder victim named Mr. Knapp has occasionally been sighted.

A beautiful gypsy queen with a retinue of ghostly crows haunts the small gypsy cemetery in **Algona, Iowa**.

Actor Cary Grant is believed to still have a room at the Hotel Blackhawk in **Davenport, Iowa**. The Hollywood legend was a guest here when he suffered the stroke that killed him in 1986.

Native Americans haunt the ancient mounds that they built around what is now **Harpers Ferry, Iowa**.

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Riding the Roller Coaster of Doom!

All the Fun of the Fair

I awoke with a start. Was that laughter I heard? It took me a moment to remember where I was, to connect the hard metallic ridges beneath me with the barely carpeted floor in the back of Ryan's van, and the absolute stygian darkness with the fact that we were parked in a clearing in the middle of a long abandoned amusement park. Lying on his side beside me, Ryan's slow, rhythmic breathing let me know that whatever I'd heard had not awakened him.

Sleep was out of the question now. Yes, that was laughter. And faint behind it, voices, cheery and excited. Snatches of music, too, and underpinning them, the low hum of machinery.

I wondered what I'd see if I sat up and wiped the condensation off the back windows. The pitch black of Whiskeyport Springs Park, one summer night in 2005? Or a scene from one of the sepia photographs that hung in frames around Ryan's office wall, preserving this place as it was a century ago?

—"Riding the Ghost Train" by Chrissie Bentley

Amusement parks should not be haunted; or, if they are, they should not be haunted by anything frightening. They are places of excitement and happiness, after all; of adventure and thrills, cotton candy and ice cream, laughter and joy.

Until they close . . . for the night, for the season, or forever. The United States is littered with the remains of long gone amusement parks, some still remembered in the relics that they have left behind, others barely visible even to the historical societies that work to preserve their sites.

Author Chrissie Bentley explains that Whiskeyport Springs in her short story "Riding the Ghost Train" was an amalgam of "three or four old parks

that I researched while I was writing the story," but its fictional fate was nevertheless built upon reality. "The golden age of the American amusement park was before the First World War; thereafter, many of them were treading water at best. So they cut back on staff, cut down on repair work, and safety went out of the window."

Mysterious fires and unknown vandals plagued the dying attractions and, regardless of whether or not the catastrophes were genuine, increasingly the different parks' owners would cede defeat. The arrival of the Great Depression killed off many of the parks that had survived the 1920s; World War II saw others still shut down. The longer the twentieth century lasted, the less people seemed to want to have fun, and palaces that had once catered to those who did were left to decay.

What is left behind, however, is endlessly fascinating. A part of it, surely, is the utter dichotomy of a place built so purposefully for pleasure being left to rot; the tendrils of nature slowly grasping and then choking the palaces of fun. An abandoned amusement park is creepy in the same way that pictures of dead clowns are creepy; it is chilling in the same manner that vampire kittens or Satanic hamsters would be chilling. Because it's just plain *wrong*.

In Ohio, Chippewa Lake Park closed for good in 1978, exactly a century after it opened, and the crumbling remains of its most impressive rides, a vast Ferris wheel and a mighty roller coaster, still lurk amid the trees and waters that long ago enshrouded them within the warm embrace of nature. For the most part, they are peaceful. No restless spirits ride them today. But some nights, it is said, you can still hear the music and laughter that once seemed set to be their eternal companions.

In 2012, stories that the Kings Island amusement park in Mason, Ohio, was haunted by the apparition of a little girl in a blue dress haunting were sufficient to attract the Syfy Channel's *Ghost Hunters* team, while other rumors inevitably attached themselves to the awful events that shook the park in just single hour on June 9, 1991. First, two men died from a massive electric shock while effecting a water rescue; then, just sixty minutes later, a third visitor fell from the Flight Commander ride and died from the impact.

Amusement was at a premium that day. But a future of fearful specters beckoned.

For fifty years, Gingerbread Castle offered hours of glorious fun to the children of Hamburg, New Jersey. But it closed in 1973, burned in 1993, and today, only the ghosts still play there. This photo was taken in 1984, during marginally happier times.

Photo by Dave Thompson

Some haunts do not need a ghost to become ghost ridden. In Beech Mountain, North Carolina, the last remains of the Land of Oz live on, decades after fire blackened the Emerald City.

Opened by entrepreneur Grover Robbins in 1970, the park was, of course, centered around a *Wizard of Oz* theme and it did so with such success that, at its peak, it was attracting twenty thousand visitors a day, and four hundred thousand in its first summer. Daily, the tourists would begin at Dorothy's farmhouse, thrill their way through a tornado, and then pick their way through a carefully constructed and beautifully designed recreation of the entire Oz adventure, favorite (and fearful) characters rising up from the soil, while costumed actors added further realism to the scenario.

They have all departed now, to be replaced at best by vandals and the homeless, but also, it is said, by darker shapes—who might be ghosts. Or they might simply be misinterpreted glimpses of the decaying faces and figures that still loom in ruined splendor.

Other spirits cannot be so easily explained away, however. In Wilmington, Delaware, a gentle walk downhill through woodland takes you past the near-forgotten foundations of the once glorious Brandywine Springs Park. But lights and laughter seen and heard after dark suggest it is only the living who have consigned the park to the depths of memory. The dead still revel in attractions that once drew visitors from across the Mid-Atlantic states.

The Ghosts of Lake Shawnee

And at Lake Shawnee Amusement Park, near Princeton, West Virginia, we gather not only because it *is* so haunted, but because the haunt itself is the confluence of so many individual events, so many long ago tragedies, that any one of which could (and in any other place, would) have been responsible for a spooky reputation.

An Indian massacre, a desecrated burial ground, a murdered gambler, at least half a dozen fatal accidents, and a written history that begins with violence and slaughter. All of these are a part of the Lake Shawnee legend. All are a part of its magic, too.

Around 1775, a settler named Mitchell Clay became the first white man to establish a farm on what had hitherto been Shawnee Indian territory in modern Mercer County. Relations with the local Native Americans were never good, however, an unspoken war of seething attrition that went on, it appears, for some eight years before finally exploding in an orgy of violence. One day while Mitchell Clay was out hunting, a party of marauding tribesmen attacked his farm. Clay returned home to discover his son Bartley and daughter Tabitha murdered—the boy had been scalped, the girl had been stabbed. Clay's eldest son, Ezekial, was missing.

Rounding up a posse of his fellow settlers, Clay rode off in search of the missing boy, pursuing what they thought were the abductors into Boone County and killing several of them before they realized that the boy was not with them.

The Indians must have split into two groups. The searchers backtracked and quickly picked up the trail of the second band who had fled into Ohio. They caught up with them, but they were too late. The kidnappers had already burned the boy at the stake.

The searchers attacked, slaughtering the Native Americans and, in keeping

with certain customs of the age, stripping skin from the corpses of their victims to be used as razor strops. The burned boy's body was taken home for burial alongside his murdered siblings, and today, a historical marker today marks the spot where Clay's farmhouse stood. It also appears to mark the epicenter of a lingering curse.

A century and a half after these bloody events, the old Clay farmland was purchased by a local businessman named Conley T. Snidow and redeveloped as an amusement park. It was an opportune time and an ideal location; the isolation that Clay would have recognized had long since been swept away by progress and the popularity of the automobile. Coal mining had opened the region up to a huge population and Snidow readily guessed that people would happily travel from miles around to visit his park.

So it proved. Opening to the public in 1926, Lake Shawnee Amusement Park was an immediate success, an irresistible lure. Rising high above the smaller attractions, the booths and the rides, a massive Ferris wheel dominated the landscape. A natural pond was excavated and transformed into a vast concrete swimming pool, complete with its own boathouse. A saloon bar and a speakeasy catered to adults. There was dancing and gambling.

Then the deaths began. The first was one of the gamblers, murdered (of course) over money. A little girl was killed when she fell from the circular swing set. A small boy perished in the pool, his arm trapped in the drain at the bottom.

Another girl perished on the swing when a soft drinks truck inadvertently reversed into her as she swung excitedly out. She was wearing a pink ruffled dress at the time and, according to witnesses who have seen her ghost, she still wears it today. Only now, it is soaked in blood.

Across barely forty years of operation, at least six children are said to have met their end at Lake Shawnee Amusement Park. And at least half of them have returned, their spirits joining those others—some believe them to be the Clay children—who were already drifting through the park after dark.

Like so many other amusement parks, Lake Shawnee's popularity tapered away as other amusements rose to prominence. Struggling through the 1950s and barely solvent into the sixties, the park closed in 1966, its attractions simply abandoned and left to rot, to become a playground for an entire host of fresh hauntings.

The shadowy figure who still rode the Ferris wheel, although it would

never move more than the wind would take it. The odors that arose from old concession stands, and the fresh sizzle of hot dogs and onion. The hum of voices that forever hung in the air. The laughter of children. All of these things made it clear that the amusements continued to amuse someone.

In 1985, one of the park's former employees, Gaylord White, purchased the park, dilapidated rides and all, with the intention of subdividing the land and selling it off as residential lots. It was very early on in the preparatory work that the first Native American artifacts came to light; and very soon after that, it became apparent that the Native Americans who once lived here had their own very personal reasons for not wanting the land to be settled by the Clay family.

Thirteen burials were excavated on the site, the majority of them children; and alongside traces of an even earlier settlement, archaeologists working in a joint dig organized by the Marshall and Concord Colleges in 1988 estimated there could be as many as three thousand burials on this patch of land. A Native American burial ground, desecrated.

Abandoning the idea of redeveloping the land, White reopened the amusement park to the living in 1985. Insurance problems saw the venture founder after just three years, and the park returned to wilderness. But the dead have never tired of it.

BRANDYWINE SPRINGS PARK
Favorite Amusement Resort of Philadelphia, Chester and Wilmington
45 Minutes From Philadelphia
25 Minutes From Chester
15 Minutes From Wilmington
Rich in Historic Interest
Glorious in Natural Beauty
Equipped with Every Safe Amusement Device
Convenient to Everywhere
Reached by Steamboat, Railroad and by Trolley at Low Fares
Over 150,000 Philadelphians Entertained Last Season
Magnificent New Features Added This Year
Always in the Lead
THE HUNGARIAN VILLAGE
Biggest Amusement Ever Placed in a Park
Record Unsurpassed!
Over Fifty Thousand in One Day
Excursionists' Paradise
Special Attention to Excursions Whether Private or Organized
Unrivaled Advantages
For the Seeker of Rest or The Whirl of Pleasure.
More Amusements, More Natural Beauty, More Historic Scenes Than Any Park in This Section.
AMERICA CAN SHOW NOTHING MORE CHARMING
Dancing for the Socially Inclined. Boating for the Athletic
Shaded Groves for the Quiet. Tables for Picknickers.
Merry-Go-Round. Toboggan. Scenic Railway.
Swings. Everything That Is Safe and Proper.
A DELIGHTFUL BIT OF NATURE
NO INTOXICATING LIQUORS Are Sold Within Miles of the Park
Best Opera Ever Offered in a Park
THE MANHATTAN OPERA COMPANY
Of New York In
The World's Biggest Operatic Successes
Company of Thirty Clever People
Orchestra of Nine Splendid Musicians
Best Company Ever Selected For a Summer Theatre
Everything That Is New
Everything That Is Good
The Park of the People
For the People's Pleasure
People's Railway Company
of Wilmington, Del.
WILSON LINE OF STEAMBOATS
Baltimore & Ohio R. R.
ADULTS, 50c CHILDREN, 25c

Brandywine Springs, Delaware, broadcasts its glories to the world in 1911. A decade later, it would be dead, and today barely even the foundations remain. Past revelers, however, don't appear to have noticed.

Author's collection

The swing set is forever in action. Gaylord White II, the park's current owner, told the Travel Channel's *The Most Terrifying Places in America* crew, "Sometimes the seat will start to move underneath your hand until you feel cold air blowing through the seat. And when you get to the middle you feel something warm. And we believe that's her spirit."

The pond was drained and filled in, but you can still hear the waters splashing. The old rides still grind and whirr, music plays, voices call to one another. And behind all of the activities of a ghostly amusement park, other sounds have been heard—the chanting of the Native Americans who once called this land home.

The park's fame spread. Television ghost hunters have visited it in force—the VisitWV.com website notes further investigations by the Discovery Channel's *Ghost Lab* and ABC Family's *The Ten Most Curious Places in the World*, with a psychic employed by the latter flatly refusing to remain on the property due to the "spiritual energy being too strong." A Facebook page was

set up and, of course, the park is opened to the public for the week before Halloween.

Ghosts do not necessarily appear to order, as the presenters of so many reality TV shows could (but probably won’t) tell you.

But there are so many of them walking Lake Shawnee that your chances of meeting at least one must be good.

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The Ghostly Gazetteer: Kansas to Kentucky

A Grisly Grounding in Groaning Graves

A woman in chains walks slowly across the fields of Fort Riley, in **Milford, Kansas**.

If any place is going to be haunted by the sights and sounds of the Pony Express, then the Hollenberg Pony Express Station in **Hanover, Kansas**, a state park and museum, would seem like the ideal place. And so it is.

Visit the Oak Hill Cemetery in **Galena, Kansas**, at 3:33 a.m. and you will (it is said) see and hear the witch who was interred at the back of the burial ground.

A nurse who fell to her death down an elevator shaft at the Old Saint Mary Hospital in **Manhattan, Kansas**, still carries a candle and a meal tray around the first floor.

For almost forty years, from 1915, Ida Day Holzapfel was head librarian at the Hutchinson Public Library in **Hutchinson, Kansas**. She is still watching over the place today.

When a hazing ritual went way too far, the Pi Kappa Phi frat house at Kansas State University in **Manhattan, Kansas**, wound up with a ghost named Duncan.

Though it long ago stopped paying his wages, the Kansas State Capitol in

Topeka, Kansas, is still being worked upon by a laborer who died on the job in the 1900s.

A fatal explosion at the Kansas City Ammunition Plant in **Parsons, Kansas**, in the late 1980s is marked today by the sound of phantom bicycle bells, transporting workers to their final shift.

An old yellow crop dusting plane preserved at the Kansas Aviation Museum in **Wichita, Kansas**, is said to be haunted by a pilot who died when it crashed.

Spectral troops still man the old Camp Scott, in **Fort Scott, Kansas**.

A honeymooning bride who fell to her death remains a regular visitor to the Cumberland Falls State Resort Park in **Williamsburg, Kentucky**.

A white-haired gentleman in a black frock coat, seen standing in the parlor of Ashland House in **Lexington, Kentucky**, is said to be Henry Clay, owner of the plantation of which the house was the heartbeat. Clay is also said to walk Oaklawn Manor in Franklin, Louisiana.

Buffalo Trace Distillery in **Frankfort, Kentucky**, was named from its construction on the site of an old buffalo crossing. It is said that the stately beasts can still be seen here today.

J. R. Pepper’s spirited photography raises eyebrows everywhere, not least of all when she takes her film

to be developed. She recalls, “I have been bringing my black and white film to the same place for the last ten years. When I first brought it in, the guy in the shop was so genuinely freaked out it was comical. ‘You took this? This is in your house??’ I remember him saying, but now he knows me as ‘that girl,’ and he’s used to it.”

© *J. R. Pepper*

Wynn Cemetery in **Clay, Kentucky**, was the site of both the execution and the burial of accused witches. Laughter, shapes, and precipitous temperature changes are all associated with the spirits of the murdered women.

Be careful of what the radio plays if you’re parked by the Grapevine Cemetery in **Madisonville, Kentucky**. If a love song hits the right note, it may well attract the spirit of the young man who committed suicide here, after his girlfriend left him.

The Old Talbott Tavern in **Bardstown, Kentucky**, was established as a stagecoach spot in 1779, and its first owner, Mrs. Talbott, is still on hand to welcome travelers.

Former students laugh and play around the Benham School House in **Cumberland, Kentucky**, despite the educators having long since moved away. Or not. The building now serves as an inn.

A hook hanging from the ceiling of the Allendale Tunnel in **Elsmere, Kentucky**, marks the spot where a man hanged himself long ago. And from where he sometimes still hangs today.

A nineteenth-century TB colony was established in **Mammoth Cave** in Kentucky’s National Park of the same name, in the belief that the cave air would prove efficacious. Of course it didn’t, and many of the patients died in the caves. They remain there to this day.

15

A Light in the Night

For Those in Peril on the Sea

Lighthouses have been the scene, and the source, of ghost stories for almost as long as man has taken it upon himself to lash a giant beacon to a storm-swept rock on the edge of a raging ocean, and then take up residence within.

It is not the loneliness and desolation of the lighthouse alone that encourages the supernatural to rise up around them. The sea itself possesses mysteries and spirits that are so ancient and formless that of all the ghost stories that we tell ourselves today, those involving lighthouses often feel the most chilling. And the most plausible.

Certainly the Syfy Channel's *Ghost Hunters* team were impressed, back in their show's very first season, by what they found at the notorious Race Rock lighthouse, off the coast of New London, CT. Built in 1878, the lighthouse is said to be haunted by two former keepers, and little about the ensuing investigation led the TV team to doubt the tales.

An EMF reading was pursued up a spiral staircase, dowsing rods apparently detected untold energies, orbs floated and faffed around as orbs always do. All of these things could be explained. What did not lend itself to easy reason was camera footage of an empty chair in the lighthouse attic, moving of its own volition when nobody else was in the room.

Ghost Hunters' own website completes the story. "As hard as it is for Jason to admit it, he and Grant report to US Coast Guard Senior Chief Boatswain's Mate J. Nolda and Boatswain's First Mate Peter Jennings that the lighthouse indeed does appear to be haunted."

It is not the only one.

There is the tower that was terrorized by the bloated corpses of mariners who saw the warning lights too late. The tower whose light would

mysteriously blink off when an imperiled vessel came close, as long dead and spectral keepers lured fresh victims down to Hell. Or the one whose entire crew mysteriously vanished one stormy night, never to be seen or heard from again. It is not an American ghost story. But its terrors were a component within the nightmares of every American lighthouse keeper.

Flannan or Flim-Flam?

Across the Atlantic Ocean, off the coast of the Scottish Isle of Lewis, the Flannan Isles lighthouse had been in operation for little more than a year when, on the night of December 15, 1900, a passing steamer reported that its light was not visible, despite the entire area being encased in a thick fog bank —the occasion, of course, upon which its light was most required.

A relief boat, the *Hesperus*, was promptly sent out to investigate, but the storms were so severe that she could not get anywhere close to the island. It would be ten days before the *Hesperus* was finally able to make landfall, throughout which time the fog had remained an impenetrable shroud, and the lighthouse had remained plunged into blackness. Long before they landed on the island, the crew of the *Hesperus* had some notion of what they would find —clearly, illness or worse had stricken the three-man crew, rendering them incapable of maintaining the lights.

What the rescue party discovered, however, was far worse than that. The crew had completely vanished. Not a trace of the three remained. The clock on the inner wall had stopped, there was no fire in the grate and all the beds were empty. A meal was prepared, but lay uneaten. The final log entry was at nine a.m. on December 15, ten days previous.

The mystery has never been solved, although theories aplenty have been raised in the century-plus since then. The arts, too, have hastened to immortalize the story. In 1912, Wilfrid Wilson Gibson's poem "Flannan Isle" introduced the tale to the literary public; since that time, the tale has inspired an opera, Peter Maxwell Davies's *The Lighthouse*; musical explorations by Genesis and Hector Zazou; and an episode of television's *Dr. Who*— Gibson's poem is quoted in part during the story "The Horror of Fang Rock."

But that is all they are, and ever can be. Explorations, quotations, theories. The men at the Flannan Isles lighthouse vanished as thoroughly as if they had been ghosts. And lighthouses attract ghosts like dead fish attract gulls. In

other words, ask an experienced ghost hunter which American lighthouses are most likely to be haunted, the response will invariably be, it’d be easier to name the ones that aren’t.

It is the sheer loneliness, inaccessibility and—though the word would be whispered softly among their builders and crew—fragility of the lighthouse that accounts for many of the most chilling tales. Off the coast of Massachusetts, for example, Minot’s Ledge lighthouse was nothing more than a great stone tower rising out of the sea from a submerged reef, and though its builders believed it to be fit for purpose, within a year of its completion, it had been destroyed by the ocean.

A second tower was constructed, even stronger than before, and this time the stone survived. It was flesh that could not withstand the constant battering of the ocean. One keeper outright retired from the lighthouse service, unable to face Minot’s Ledge any longer.

Another went insane and was transported from the reef squirming in the straitjacket from which he would never escape. A third slit his own throat and bled to death. Even the lighthouse cat went mad. And finally, there was the pair of keepers who, working through a fierce nor’easter in April 1851, perished when this second lighthouse was destroyed—but who, when a third tower was erected, returned to duty regardless.

Madness on the Rocks

Insanity was a constant foe of the lighthouse man, but so was sheer exasperation—or so it is said in the favor of one particular keeper of the Southeast Light on Block Island, Rhode Island. Early in the twentieth century, this gentleman made the mistake of moving his wife out to the lighthouse with him, thinking that her company would keep him sane. In fact, it quickly proved that quite the opposite was in store, for he had married a nag and, out on a lighthouse with nothing else to do, that is apparently all she did. From dawn to dusk and into the night as well, a ceaseless barrage of complaint and abuse—until finally, her railings proved to be not so unstoppable after all.

Did she, as the keeper insisted, commit suicide one night, hurling herself down the stairs from the top of the tower? Or did he, as the prosecution and jury agreed, hurl her down himself, driven to final distraction by her constant

carping?

We may never know for sure. But Mad Maggie, as the ghost is called, seems to have no doubt. Not a single man has been able to work in the lighthouse without Mad Maggie harassing him . . . one poor chap was so terrified by her that she chased him out of the lighthouse clad only in his underwear and then locked the door behind him. Others have been punched, pushed and generally abused, while she rearranges furniture, throws food, bangs pots and pans and generally kicks up the unholiest of rackets.

So much for Mad Maggie. But there is another murdered lighthouse keeper's wife to be found in Maine, ten miles out in Boothbay Harbor, and as awful as Maggie's story is, Seguin Light might well be home to one of the most gruesome lighthouse hauntings of them all.

A newly married keeper, it is said, brought his young wife out to the light with him, and to fend off boredom, he also purchased a piano for her to play. Unfortunately, only one piece of sheet music was delivered with the piano, and constant storms prevented more from being ordered.

So she played the one song she knew how to play.

Played it and played it and played it.

Played it and played it and played it and played it and played it and played it.

Over and over and over, until her husband had been driven quite insane. So he took an axe and chopped up the piano. Then, when his wife complained, he chopped her up as well. And then he killed himself. Listen closely at night, however, and the piano still plays the only tune it ever knew.

Another lighthouse in that same harbor also has a story to tell. The light on Ram Island has stood sentinel over the entrance to the harbor since 1883; prior to that, tradition insisted that the last fisherman into the harbor at night hang a light to warn approaching mariners of the rocks.

But an unknown woman in white is also said to have contributed to the cause, standing on rocks, the reef and, on one occasion, even the prow of a burning boat, holding a torch and gesticulating wildly. Who she is, or why she is there, nobody knows. But the fact that she is still occasionally seen to this day proves that she has no earthly origin.

There is no explanation, either, for the haunting that an edition of the *New York Sun* reported upon in September 1885—not quite a lighthouse, but redolent of one, both to the modern reader and to the original reporter.

> Over at the Thimble Islands, off Stony Creek, is an acre or two of soil piled high on a lot of rocks. The natives call it Frisbie Island. Not more than a hundred yards offshore it contains a big bleak-looking house which was built about twenty years ago to serve as a Summer hotel when Connecticut capitalists were deep in schemes to tempt New Yorkers to this part of the Sound shore to spend their Summers. New Yorkers declined to be tempted, and the old house is rapidly approaching decay. It has recently assumed a peculiar interest for the residents of Stony Creek. Midnight lights have suddenly appeared in all its windows at frequent intervals, fitfully flashing up and down like the blaze in the Long Island lighthouses.
>
> Ghosts! This is the universal verdict. Nobody disputes it. Once or twice a hardy crew of local sailors have volunteered to go out and investigate the mystery, but when the time for the test has arrived, there somehow have always been reasons for postponing the excursion. Cynical people profess to believe that practical jokers are at the root of the manifestations, but such a profane view is not widely entertained among the good people who have their homes at Stony Creek.

Further mystery attends the unnamed redhead who sits, wrapped in a shawl, by the fireplace in the keeper’s hut of yet another Maine light, Pemaquid Lighthouse. She is simply there, and the fact that no deaths are associated with the light, no tragedies and no mysteries has baffled many a researcher.

Widowed Gene Tierney and an old dead sea captain (Rex Harrison) play out one of the most beautiful spectral love stories of all time, *The Ghost and Mrs. Muir* (1947).

20th Century-Fox/Photofest

But wait! The fact that the lighthouse stands at all reminds us that the ocean itself is perilous. Could the nameless redhead be a victim of one of the shipwrecks that befell the waters in the years before the lighthouse was erected? Or the landlocked loved one of a victim?

Elsewhere on land, ghosts are often believed to be those people who met their own end in a certain place. Lighthouses are one of the few places where that certainty becomes blurred. Like airports in the modern age, where the spirits of mourners are still said to await the arrival of long-crashed passenger planes, lighthouses represent a place *not* where life and death trade places, but where hope and sorrow pass one another by, and a fresh chilling echo is left behind.

If a lighthouse can conceal a mystery, its isolation can also, if necessary, conceal a crime. New Presque Light Station in Alpena, Michigan, was opened in 1870 and is haunted by a woman about whom . . . some say, simply living in the lighthouse drove her mad. Others say her husband was responsible for her madness, when he locked her in the tower every time he went into town to spend time with another woman. Either way, her screams can still be heard above the roar of the winds coming in off Lake Huron.

Dying for a Cigarette

Another example?

In 1819, one William Moore was appointed the first keeper of Bird Island Lighthouse in Marion, Massachusetts. Like his counterpart at Sequin, he was accompanied by his wife and, like his counterpart, the deprivations that are part and parcel of a lighthouse keeper's life quickly wore heavily on the woman.

She was a smoker . . . or at least, she was a tobacco user, and so avid an addict that when her supply was exhausted, her withdrawal pains were such that her screams and complaints could apparently be heard on the mainland.

Her husband, however, refused to let her go ashore to replenish her supplies. He was naturally a jealous man, and the nature of the life he had foisted upon his wife only amplified his anxieties. Allow her to go to shore, he was sure, and she would abandon him for another man without a second thought. Or at least for a less lonely life.

Plus she was a consumptive, as sufferers of tuberculosis were called in those days, and he also feared—quite rightly, as it happens—that she would be hospitalized should anyone see how poorly she was faring in the cold damp air of the lighthouse.

Occasionally, people from the mainland would smuggle tobacco across to her; and even the doctor, summoned as her health continued to fail, recommended that she be allowed access to the weed.

Her husband, however, refused and so the poor woman died, gasping for tobacco until her final breath, and few people on the mainland doubted that it was her husband's cruel prohibition, as opposed to the TB, that finally laid her low.

He would not be rid of her, however. For the remainder of his time on the lighthouse, and on into the future as well, her coughing and cries could be heard on the island; and sometimes she would even leave her grave, for she was buried on the island, too, and make her way to the lighthouse door, where she would knock and ask for tobacco. She would not, one can safely assume, be impressed by the modern distaste for her particular habit.

Plus, she is in good company. A lot of ghosts seem to smoke, presumably because already being dead is probably the ultimate comeback to all those sanctimonious Goody-Two-Shoes types who apparently live only for the pleasure of warning smokers of the perils of their habit. "What's it going to do?" asks the chided ghost in amazement. "Kill me?"

Captain James Townsend, resident spirit at the Seul Choix Point Lighthouse, on Lake Michigan, is renowned throughout the ghost hunting community as a dedicated tobacco addict. The captain of one of the vessels that worked the lakes, and also the brother of the lighthouse keeper, Joseph Townsend, Captain James was visiting the lighthouse in August 1910, when he succumbed to a mystery illness. His body remained at the lighthouse for viewing for a few days, prior to being shipped ashore for burial at the cemetery in Manistique, but the captain's spirit did not follow his earthly remains. He remains at the lighthouse, still puffing away on the cigars that were his delight throughout his life, and which have assailed the nostrils of visitors to the lighthouse ever since.

But if he should ever choose to take a vacation, he could do a lot worse than make his way to St. Augustine, Florida. For there, off the coast of America's oldest city, the St. Augustine Lighthouse on Anastasia Island is *also* haunted by a phantom cigar smoker . . . or, at least, by phantom cigar smoke . . . which itself might be the least alarming of the veritable gaggle of ghosts that is said to treat the lighthouse as home.

There are the thirteen pirates who legend insists were hanged at the lighthouse and then buried behind the tower.

There is the shipwrecked sailor seen sitting on the rocks, staring as if in disbelief at the ocean.

And there are the children.

These most tragic of all the lighthouse's spectral occupants date from 1873 and the construction of the present-day tower. The chief engineer, Hezekiah Pittee, had moved his family down from Maine to be with him while he worked, and when a tramway was built that connected the lighthouse to the mainland, to aid in the construction work, nobody thought anything of the Pittees' five children, and their friends as well, riding it back and forth.

Until the day that it derailed and pitched its human cargo into the sea.

Three children perished, two of the Pittees' own and a third, a friend, and their spirits play at the site to this day, one readily identifiable by the blue dress that she wore on the day of the accident.

Look Out for Lookout

What is probably America's most haunted lighthouse, however, could also

arguably stake a claim to be among the nation's most haunted hospitals, too. For Point Lookout in Maryland has served in both of these roles.

Built in the 1830s, the lighthouse's oldest spectral occupant is Ann Davis, the wife of the tower's first keeper and herself its custodian for thirty years, following the death of her husband. Her lifeless body was discovered in the lantern room that she tended with such dedication sometime around 1860—or shortly before the federal government built both a prisoner of war camp and a military hospital within walking distance of the light. One reason, perhaps, why Ann is most frequently heard to sigh and declare, "This is my home." How else to discourage the attentions of the dozens of other spirits that are said to haunt the lighthouse?

One of them would seem to have at least as valid a claim on the place as Ann. The drowned, uniformed figure of Joseph Haney, an officer on board a ship wrecked on the rocks here, is frequently seen by the lighthouse door, his clothes and hair dripping wet, as though he has just emerged from the sea.

Other spirits, however, are said to crowd the kitchen area, or make revolting odors in the upstairs rooms. Mysterious lights have been seen, and footsteps are heard in empty rooms. But most disturbing of them all, and perhaps the cause for Ann's apparent weary insistence, are the moans, groans and cries of the patients from the hospital—of whom more than four thousand are known to have been buried around and even beneath the lighthouse. Some are in uniform, others are not. Some are hideously disfigured by whatever wounds brought them to Point Lookout in the first place, others have passed beyond the appearance of flesh and manifest themselves as mere vapor or shadows.

All however still consider themselves to be patients of the hospital. And guests of the lighthouse, too.

16

The Ghostly Gazetteer: Louisiana

An Unwholesome Household of the Hairiest Horrors

Having blazed a glorious trail of banditry and beastliness across the central United States, the legendary Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow finally perished in a murderous hail of gunfire outside **Gibsland, Louisiana**. The ambush site is clearly marked today, and the sound of the fatal shooting can often be heard, too.

A headless man is said to haunt Miller Cemetery in **Eunice, Louisiana**, and may also be the cause of the engine troubles that so often plague drivers as they pass by at night.

Mary Jane was a young woman from **Broussard, Louisiana**, who was raped and murdered and then tossed off a local bridge into the swamps. Or so goes the legend that adheres today to . . . what else? Mary Jane's Bridge.

It sounds like something from a Jerry Reed song, but a sheriff really did go missing in the bayou, southeast of **Thibodaux, Louisiana**. He may not have been killed by Amos Moses, but his spirit is apparently out for blood regardless.

Every full moon, a solitary bride walks through the oak trees that line the Parlange Plantation House in **New Roads, Louisiana**.

Country singer Hank Williams has supposedly been spotted hanging out at the set of the old Louisiana Hayride in **Shreveport, Louisiana**.

Maltreated slaves haunt the old Magnolia Plantation in **Cloutierville, Louisiana**.

If you need to ask directions around Woodland Plantation in **Port Sulphur, Louisiana**, and see a young boy who looks like he might be helpful . . . don't be surprised if he just vanishes into thin air. He's been doing that for years, whenever he's posed a question.

The Miltenberger House on the corner of Royal and Dumaine in New Orleans is said to be haunted by up to three generations of the Creole family for whom the house is named.

Photo by Dave Thompson

A mysterious black mist haunts the Northshore Regional Medical Center in **Slidell, Louisiana**.

The ghost of a small white dog has the run of the Madewood Plantation in **Napoleonville, Louisiana**.

The night she died, horribly murdered alongside her innkeeper mother, invalided Belle Robertson rang her little bell for what seemed an eternity before her killer finally silenced it. Some visitors to Bienvenue House in **Saint Martinville, Louisiana**, say that sometimes, you can still hear it

tinkling.

Civil War soldiers walk Fort Jackson in **Buras, Louisiana**.

A former hospital is always going to remember its past, and the old building in **Ruston, Louisiana**, has no shortage of sickly permanent residents.

A granddaughter of General Wade Hamilton walks the Houmas House Plantation in **Donaldsville, Louisiana**.

A one-legged nautical ghost known as Hoppy, perhaps a pirate who turned against his shipmates, haunts the centuries-old Nicholson Home in **Washington, Louisiana**.

A first-floor fireplace in Lafitte's Blacksmith Shop in New Orleans is said to have been the hiding place for pirate Jean Lafitte's gold—a very good reason, then, for him to still be guarding it.

Photo by Dave Thompson

Are there really ghosts at the Central Louisiana State Hospital in **Pineville, Louisiana**? What do you expect?

The construction of the **Raccourci Cutoff**, one of several man-made operations designed to trim the length of the Mississippi, stranded one of the river's trademark paddle steamers within the cutoff. On foggy nights, it is said, the vessel can still be heard chugging back and forth, while its signal bell clangs and its pilot screams curses at the boat, the river, and anything else that catches his eye.

Former owners haunt the **Destrehan Plantation**, the oldest plantation in Louisiana and namesake of the nearby town—the consequence, it is said, of an especially nasty curse laid upon the place by the captured and convicted leader of a planned slave rebellion.

17

The Hospital of Lost Souls

Or, I Told You I Was Sick

The most fascinating thing about the majority of ghosts is that they really don't make a fuss. They don't moan, they don't groan, they don't rattle chains, they don't throw things around. In fact, most of the time, you wouldn't even know they were there.

Maybe you will feel a slight change in air pressure, as though some psychic barometer has just hit a hiccup. Possibly you'll experience a chill, but it's nothing like the "cold spots" that you hear about on television. There might be a movement in the very periphery of your vision, or a whisper at the outermost limits of your hearing. Try to explain what it is that you saw, heard or felt, however, and you will find that you really don't have the words. It was just "something."

There is no pattern to these sensations, and even when you do recognize what just happened, it is rarely more than the most fleeting impression, a moment captured at the back of the mind before one's concentration is jerked in another direction entirely.

Perhaps that, it has been surmised by sundry researchers, is why so few functioning hospitals are widely believed to be haunted; why it is that the vast majority of medical spectral visitations take place after the building has itself passed on, whether it is being put to another use (the Cripple Creek hospital that we visited a few chapters back is now a hotel), or hangs derelict, with no purpose whatsoever. Infinitely more abandoned hospitals have a supernatural reputation than do working establishments.

Why should this be? Again, it could be that the haunting is already in place; but the daily business of the establishment is so all-consuming that nobody has the *time* to notice the traditional symptoms. Indeed, even among hospital

workers who do claim to be sensitive, most agree that the more reason a room might have to *be* haunted—an operating theater, perhaps, or the emergency department—those are the places where you are *least* likely to feel something, as though the twenty-four-hour drama that is the room's natural state simply doesn't have the room for anything more. Or, that even the most bitter, vengeful ghost would take one look at the suffering that is already in play and know there was no way it could even make a dent.

Andy Warhol has been seen, it is said, in New York Hospital–Cornell Medical Center, where he died in February 1987. He doesn't make a fuss; in fact you'd probably not even notice him if that shock of hair hadn't caught your eye, and you'd take a second look as we all do when confronted with a particularly badly worn or designed hair piece.

Warhol's is, apparently, such a monstrosity, but he doesn't care about that; doesn't look as though he cares much about anything. He just sits gazing quizzically into space, the classic hospital ghost. Because it is the calm that hospital folk tend to notice. The patches of quiet, of rest, of peace. Of silence.

There's a corridor running behind the emergency room in one of the hospitals in Delaware where a number of people have heard something that sounds like their name being spoken, brusquely and suddenly, in one ear. But the speaker is never in sight.

St. Mary's in Tucson has a handful of ghosts, including a number who, apparently, enjoy riding the elevators—they are seen boarding the car on one floor, but they never exit on another.

There is also a nun who haunts so peaceably that most people who see her simply assume she's "really" there, quietly going about her business of administering to the spiritual needs of the living. Which, of course, might well be what she is doing. More than one so-called "near-death experience" has involved the presence of a nun, or some other religious figure, either waiting to transport the newly deceased to the next world—or telling them go back, because it isn't yet their time.

There is a corridor just off the lobby of Boston Children's Hospital, where people have apparently felt *something*; and Harborview in Seattle has three or four rooms, and at least one former ward, where the staff no longer even need to mention they've experienced a certain gentle presence. They just know that it's there, and so it is in hospitals the length and breadth of the United States. Again, there is already such a high level of energy sparking through the

building, emotion, elation, fear and despair, agony and ecstasy all pouring into the atmosphere, that it would take a very determined haunting indeed to truly get people's attention.

Miramont Castle, in Manitou Springs, Colorado, is said to be haunted by the ghostly sisters who once operated the Montcalm sanatorium here.

Photo by Dave Thompson

But it does happen. A poltergeist took up residence in the Royal Hope Hospital in St. Augustine, Florida, its presence allegedly explained, during renovation work, by the discovery that the place was originally built on an old Native American burial ground; while Taunton State Hospital, a psychiatric unit in Massachusetts, boasted a shadow man who would creep through the very walls of the building and stare at the patients as they lay in bed.

In Yorktown, Texas, a hospital that operated for around forty years until its closure in the late 1980s boasted a number of reported shapes and shadows, several of whom enjoy jostling visitors, but only one of whom had an identity, a junkie named TJ. In Springville, California, a former TB sanitarium has been converted into apartments, where cold spots and phantom voices are reported to be rife.

Screams, prayers, cries of pain and pleas for mercy echo through the former temporary hospital set up, again during the Civil War, at Landon House in

Frederick, Maryland, while yet another makeshift ward, at the University Chapel at Auburn, Alabama, remains home to a Confederate soldier named Sidney Grimlett.

Waverly Hills

America's most haunted hospital is a title that several former institutions vie for. Few, however, have the sheer weight of reputation as that which attends the Old Waverly Hospital, a former TB sanatorium in Louisville, Kentucky.

Its grim hulk gaunt and dark still on the modern city skyline, the Old Waverly Hospital stands on one of the highest hills in southern Jefferson County, a testament to the belief that rarified air was beneficial to TB's victims.

It was originally opened in 1910, a two-story wooden building with forty beds, in an age when TB was seemingly endemic to the region. Indeed, so common was the illness (and so popular the hospital) that, within a very short time, no fewer than 130 patients were being treated in a facility designed for one-third that many, and in 1924 work began on new, far larger hospital.

The new Waverly Hills opened in 1926, and it proclaimed itself to be the most advanced tuberculosis hospital in the country. Which it might have been. Unfortunately, the battle against TB was, at that time, one that man seldom won. The vast majority of patients, at Waverley no less than anyplace else, were there simply to die, and they did so. Records from the hospital's heyday do not survive, but it is estimated that tens of thousands of patients died at Waverly, with one especially virulent epidemic allegedly claiming one life every hour.

There was no cure for TB at the time, beyond the belief that nutritional food, mountain air and exercise were probably beneficial. Experimental cures were constantly being devised, then, and many were put into practice at Waverly, at least until they were proven not to work. Constant exposure to sunlight, or its artificially created ultraviolet twin, was one; fresh air, regardless of the weather, was another. Photographs exist of patients lined up either outside the hospital, or up on its roof, their beds and bodies covered in snow, in the hope that the clean, cold country air would force their diseased lungs to expand.

Other methods of treating the disease were somewhat bloodier—and just as

dangerous. The insertion and inflation of balloons inside the lungs was one; the removal of ribs and muscle was another. Some methods showed promise, others were messy disasters. Almost all, however, ended in the same place, in the body chute that traveled from the hospital mortuary down to the railroad tracks at the foot of the hill.

Before they took that final slide, however, there was one final indignity to be endured. The draining room. The sanatorium had no cemetery of its own, but infected corpses could not be allowed out of the grounds. So they were drained, hung on poles and slit from groin to sternum, so that the natural fluids would all flow out into vast drainage pits. Only then, once the cadavers were empty, could they resume their final journey.

If you have ever doubted the viability of spectral puddles, a visit to the Waverley drainage room might well change your thinking.

Although it often seemed a futile battle, the work carried out at Waverly did have an effect, both in treating TB and helping prevent it. Already by the 1930s, a decade before Rutgers University student Albert Schatz discovered streptomycin, the first genuinely effective cure, outbreaks of the disease were declining. By the mid-1950s, TB had largely been eradicated in the United States and, in 1961, Waverly Hills Sanatorium closed its doors to further TB patients. For two decades after that, the buildings operated as Woodhaven Geriatrics Sanitarium, before closing in 1982.

Since that time, the site has had a number of owners and been lined up for a number of fates. The most lasting impression on the old fabric, however, was the work of the landlord who declared his intention to demolish all the buildings in order to erect the world’s largest statue of Jesus Christ—a plan that was stymied when he discovered that the main hospital building was on the National Historic Register’s “endangered” list.

Thwarted, he then opened the building up to the elements, and anybody else who might like to visit. Vagrants, vandals, whoever.

It’s an old trick, one that property developers the world over will employ when historical interests stand in the way of their vision of progress. The act of registering a building as being worthy of preservation, after all, is often merely a cosmetic sop to local sensibilities. Somebody actually has to be willing to oversee and enact that preservation, with all the legal and financial implications that involves. Without that oversight, the building will usually end up being demolished or destroyed in the end. It just won’t be permitted a

dignified death.

Inwardly smashed, outwardly battered, the old hospital building certainly suffered all of the deprecations that its owner seemed to feel it merited. It was, however, made of sterner stuff that anybody expected. Even an attempt to undermine the building's foundations failed. The years of abuse and decay ultimately served just one purpose. They conjured up the reputation that Waverly Hills still enjoys today; that it is haunted . . . no, more than haunted. It is *infested*.

Locally, the first ghost stories were told from a distance, passersby who saw lights or movement within the abandoned building. But of course, with vandals and vagrants loose in the grounds, there was always going to be a reasonable explanation for such sightings.

It was when the vandals and vagrants themselves began to report hearing or seeing something inexplicable that Waverly Hills commenced gathering a more-than-local renown to itself. By the time it was sold to owners who appeared willing to leave the hospital to stand, in 2001, a handful of ghosts were already firmly in residence.

There was the little girl who runs through the third-floor solarium, playing hide-and-seek with trespassers; and another who remains silently standing before solemnly declaring to whoever might be listening that she has no eyes.

There is the man in a white coat who paces the cafeteria, while the smell of cooking wafts out of the long-dismantled kitchens. There is the little boy who plays forever with his leather ball. There is the hearse that motors slowly up to the mortuary doors to deliver empty coffins. There is the maintenance man whom the locals have apparently nicknamed Ralph.

Up on the roof, where patients used to be taken for their daily dose of heliotherapy—the healing rays of the sun—bored children can be heard singing "Ring Around the Rosy." And there is Room 502, to one side of one of the fifth-floor nurses' stations, where figures stand at the windows, staring back at whoever might be looking in from outside; where disembodied voices hiss "get out . . ."; and from whence local suicides, so the legend goes, have been known to hurl themselves to the ground below, in chilling imitation of Waverly's first recorded self-destruction, just two years after the rebuilt hospital opened. In 1928, an unmarried, pregnant nurse hanged herself from the light fitting in that room. Four years later, another nurse passed through Room 502 to the balcony outside, then leaped to her death.

But what of the woman who bolts from the very front door of the hospital, her raised arms wrapped in chains, blood pumping from her severed wrists, while she screams out, “Help me, somebody save me!” What nightmarish occurrence precipitated her haunting?

Doors slam, objects move. There has been no electricity piped into the place since the early 1980s, and any surviving lightbulbs were broken decades ago. But still rooms are illuminated brightly at night. Deep red glows, as though a fire was burning in the heart of the hospital, are seen, but no flames are present. Screams are heard echoing through the halls.

Inevitably the house came to national attention. Fox TV’s *The World’s Scariest Places* was the first reality television crew to visit, their cameras capturing the sheer devastation caused by two decades of abandonment and vandalism. Nothing had survived; if it was breakable, it was broken; if it wasn’t breakable, somebody had had a go anyway. Graffiti clung to every surface, and where an example of the original sanatorium’s own art had survived, in the form of a massive mural in the cafeteria, that had been graffiti’d over too. And while the cameras recorded no more incontrovertible evidence than such intrusions ever capture, one thought does arise from a tour of the devastated building.

The possibility that the ghosts are responding as much to the destruction of their home, as to any “traditional” reason for a haunting, is surely one that all future investigators should consider.

The Asylum of Death

Hospitals and sanatoriums are haunted by the sick and dying. Mental asylums are haunted by more disturbed spirits—some of whom might never even have been sick in the first place.

The history of psychiatric care in America—and, indeed, around the world—has never ranked high among the human race’s greatest success stories, with even its most so-called humanitarian treatments often little more than the medical profession finding new ways to suppress, rather than cure, whatever ailments that modern research has now determined require treatment.

Shock treatment, lobotomies, zombie drugs, none of these procedures actually *cured* their patients. They just kept them quiet long enough for the

shrink to move on to his next victim, and the further one travels back in time, the more horrific we learn the suggested treatments were. And even if we were to state here and now, irrevocably and irrefutably, that ghosts do not exist, there are still few people who would willingly spend a night alone in some of America's most horrifically haunted old asylums.

Much of what we know today about the nature of the Victorian asylum is drawn from the writings of the pioneering female journalist Nelly Bly—an attractive twenty-three-year-old cub reporter named Elizabeth Cochrane (she took her pen name from a popular Stephen Foster song), who determined to establish herself as a serious writer in a business that, in the 1880s, was dominated by male writers. She knew, if she were to succeed, that she needed create a story that would itself make a major splash—and she did so with astonishing aplomb.

"The insane asylum on Blackwell's Island is a human rat-trap," she wrote in 1887. "It is easy to get in, but once there it is impossible to get out." And she knew this because, in pursuit of a story that she called, self-explanatorily, *Ten Days in a Madhouse*, she had herself committed to New York City's most notorious asylum. And once there, she set about recording all that she saw, heard and suffered in a series of articles that, both in newspaper form and later, in the form of a best-selling book, did much to reform the entire nation's approach to the care of its disturbed.

Tales of the terrors that were rife within the walls of the madhouse were a common occurrence in the newspapers of the late 1880s, although many—at least, according to the staff and administrators of such places—were cruel and ignorant exaggerations, the wild imaginings of a sensationalist press at its most vicarious.

In fact, many of them were probably horribly accurate. Blackwell's Island was opened in 1839, the nation's first-ever municipal mental asylum. It prided itself upon being the most up-to-date facility of its kind in the world, but when author Charles Dickens visited it in 1842, he came away horrified by its "listless, madhouse air." The fact that the majority of the hospital's staff were actually inmates from various local jails only added to the menace.

Actually finding her way into the asylum proved, Bly discovered, shockingly simple. There was no litmus test for lunatics in those days; no panel of learned psychiatrists who would hem and haw and question the patient before arriving at their considered determination. Just a succession of

public employees who cared only to push the problem into somebody else's lap.

Bly commenced her deception by giving up bathing and cleaning her teeth. She allowed her hair to grow wild and spent hours before the mirror, practicing what she considered to be a wild expression. Adopting a Hispanic accent and the persona of an uneducated Cuban immigrant named Nellie Moreno, she checked herself into a cheap and nasty boarding house and proceeded to terrify everybody she met, ranting and raving . . . like a crazy woman! Finally, the police came to carry her away and launch her into the succession of court appearances that would eventually see her sent to Blackwell's Island. It was, she wrote, "the greatest night of my life."

Diagnosed as "delusional and undoubtedly insane," she was indeed condemned to the hospital—at the same time, quite unexpectedly, becoming a cause célèbre in the pages of other newspapers. Word of the plight of such a pretty little thing inevitably made its way into other papers' newsrooms, and soon the lowest elements of the New York press were themselves running speculative stories on who this "mysterious waif with the wild, hunted look in her eyes" might be.

Her own newspaper kept its counsel, of course. Nobody else cottoned on to the truth. She was in.

Like so many other people, Bly had always believed, or at least hoped, that the more brutal stories that allegedly leaked out of the hospital were either vile exaggerations or sheer invention. In fact, she discovered that most of them completely underestimated the horrors that took place within those walls. The doctors were completely outnumbered by their patients and seemed oblivious to the suffering that took place around them. The orderlies had the run of the place, which in turn gave them license to treat . . . or, more accurately, *mis*treat . . . the patients however they wished.

The food was rancid, the bedding was filthy. Blood and other bodily fluids decorated every surface. Hygiene was a matter of throwing buckets of iced water over naked patients. And as for the treatment that the inmates received, *that*, Bly discovered, was guaranteed only to drive them further over the edge.

"Take a perfectly sane and healthy woman," she wrote, "[and] shut her up and make her sit from six a.m. to eight p.m. on straight-back benches, do not allow her to talk or move during these hours, give her no reading and let her

know nothing of the world or its doings, give her bad food and harsh treatment, and see how long it will take to make her insane. Two months would make her a mental and physical wreck."

Neither was she exaggerating. Perhaps the most terrifying discovery of them all was the fact that many of the patients weren't actually insane. Not when they first arrived, anyway. They were immigrants who didn't speak sufficient English to make themselves understood by the policemen who arrested them, the courts they passed through, or the doctors who "treated" them.

Bly had arranged with her editor that she would remain an inmate for ten days. At the end of that time, an attorney organized her release and, two days later, the first installment of her story appeared in *The World*. It caused an immediate uproar, not only among those people who had long been campaigning for a overhaul of the treatment meted out to America's insane, but also among the doctors and psychiatrists who had so easily been fooled into locking Bly up in the first place.

Indeed, so profound was her story's impact, and so vast the public outcry that, when Bly returned to Blackwell's Island a month later, this time in the company of a grand jury, it was to discover that many of the worst excesses that she had previously noted had already been curtailed. American psychiatric care would never become ideal. But, thanks to Bly, it certainly became a lot better than it had been.

Perhaps that is why the ghosts that walk the old asylum—long ago converted to apartment buildings on the renamed Roosevelt Island—are largely confined to mysterious lights, whispers and shadows, and the occasional area that dogs are loath to pass through. Blackwell's was exposed and it was improved. The spirit world was satisfied. It's the asylums that were not immediately benefited by the crusading Bly that host the greatest horrors.

Even beneath the patina of brightly colored graffiti that now bedecks its gray concrete walls, the ruins of the old Western State Hospital in Fort Steilacoom County Park, in Lakewood, Washington, are a foreboding pile. Empty-eyed and hollow, and peculiarly soulless, in a way that only concrete buildings can be, it looks and feels almost industrial—which is apt, given the procedures for which Western State is best remembered today. It was among the hospitals that pioneered lobotomy, a procedure in which an ice-pick

shaped instrument called a leucotome was inserted under the patient's eyelid, where the skull is thinnest, and then pushed into the frontal lobes of the brain. It would then be moved around, destroying the areas that it was believed were responsible for violent or antisocial behavior. For a time, too, the procedure seemed to work; patients would become calmer. But, as more than one commentator has since remarked, so would you if there was a doctor sticking an ice pick under your eyelid and rooting around inside your head.

Obviously, any establishment where such a procedure was considered humane treatment of patients was scarcely going to be a happy home, while those other ills that beset the American mental health system of the age, ranging from sadistic orderlies to simple overcrowding, added to the hospital's grim reputation. So did the rumors, never disproven, that orderlies actually operated several of the wards as virtual brothels for soldiers stationed at nearby Fort Lewis.

Western State's most notorious patient was the actress Frances Farmer, although despite rumors to the contrary, she was not lobotomized, there or anyplace else. According to her autobiography, however, she did suffer electroshock and insulin shock treatment there, and while the popular belief that Farmer's ghost is occasionally seen within the ruins is probably fanciful, the sheer terror that she must have endured during her stay might well have left its mark on the fabric.

Hers, and many more. The entire site is rife with sounds, sensations, sudden cold spots and more, all the psychic paraphernalia of one of Washington State's most haunted sites. But not necessarily one of America's most haunted asylums, although the true recipient of that honor at least shares its name with the West Coast hellhole.

The star now of myriad television programs, Internet sites, books and more, the Western State Lunatic Asylum in Staunton, Virginia, was notoriously the center for some of the most barbaric treatment meted out in any American hospital. The pathetic victims of the sadistic Dr. Joseph Dejarnette can still be heard suffering, and they are simply the most vocal of the asylum's permanent residents. Every psychic phenomenon one can imagine, from full-body apparitions to merely things that go bump in the night are alive and well at Western State.

Another horrifying haunt can be hunted at the former mental hospital in Athens, Ohio, where the remains of almost two thousand of the patients who

passed through the building between 1874 and 1993 still rest beneath the ground.

The former wards are apparently equally full of the screaming and cursing of some of the most violent patients any hospital has ever seen, and it is worth noting that through the 1950s, Athens was also at the forefront of lobotomy treatment and research. Spirits scarred by that procedure continue to play out the pain and anguish that it entailed.

It is strange, then, that the hospital's best-known, and most restless, spirit was not that of a victim of one of medicine's madder methodologies, but of something that itself has never been identified.

On December 1, 1978, a patient named Margaret Schilling disappeared from her ward. Her body was discovered six weeks later by one of the maintenance men, lying in an abandoned top-floor ward. The cause of death was heart failure, but Ms. Schilling had no history of, or predisposition toward, such an ailment.

Nor could anybody explain what she was doing in that long-vacant part of the building. All that could be determined was that the stain on the floor where her body had laid could never be cleaned away, and that it is Margaret whose voice can still be heard to whisper and giggle in the now empty building, and whose face stares out of the window.

Passageways built between buildings beneath the old Byberry Mental Hospital in Philadelphia are said still to be in regular use, if only by the spirit of a knife-wielding madman whom the hospital was evidently unable to treat.

Or maybe he was treated too well. For as fearful are the phantoms that assault the minds of the mad, how much more terrifying can be the delusions that assail the intellect of those whom society deems to be the sanest—the doctors, specialists and surgeons to whom we turn so trusting to treat us whenever we ourselves are ailing.

So-called "angels of mercy," taking it upon themselves to euthanize patients whom they believe to be beyond salvation, were a common shadow in the annals of medicine even before the debate over the Right to Die emerged in the late 1980s. Psychopathic butchers suppressing their evil longings long enough to accrue the necessary medical qualifications have for many years hacked their way through horror fiction. And quack cures that kill remain a chilling component in any discussion of so-called alternative medicines.

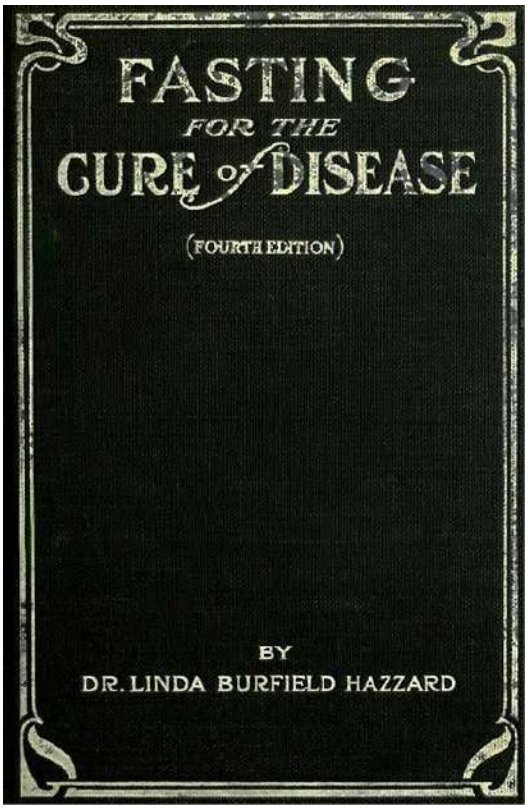
But there is a patch of land in Washington State, out in the beautiful seclusion of Kitsap County, where doctoring and delusions truly collided with the most tragic consequences.

Starvation Heights

The facts are simple. Starvation Heights was the local nickname for the sanatorium where Dr. Linda Burfield Hazzard and her husband, Sam, ran a course in therapeutic fasting during the 1900s—therapeutic fasting being, although the literature didn't *quite* make this plain, a process by which patients were effectively (and voluntarily) starved to death, while also being convinced to make their entire worldly fortunes over to the good doctor, all in the name of ridding the body of sundry other ailments. You could even argue that it worked. Not even the most lethal, painful cancer will survive if the host body dies of hunger first.

Forty-four years old when she was arrested in 1911, Dr. Hazzard, for such she was, is remembered as the first professional in the United States ever to earn a medical degree as a "fasting specialist"—and with good reason. Prior to her conviction, Dr. Hazzard's ministrations did away with at least fifteen patients, and the only thing that can perhaps be said in the doctor's own favor is that she clearly believed in her own methods. When she determined her own body to be ravaged by illness, in 1938, she had no hesitation in subjecting herself to the same methods as she had recommended to her patients, and she died of self-starvation.

The kernel of Hazzard's practice was that fasting could rid the body of sickness and disease. In her best-known medical treatise, 1909's *Fasting for the Cure of Disease*, she wrote: "It should not require an exhaustive argument to establish the fact that disease has its origin in impaired digestion.



The book behind so many deaths.

Internet Archive/Wikimedia Commons

"Upon this fundamental truth and its development the treatment known as the fasting treatment, depends on its entirety; and long experience at varied hands has demonstrated that, whatever the manifestation, the only disease is impure blood and its sole cause impaired digestion."

She was certainly a highly convincing spokesman for her beliefs. "Popular belief and medical teaching lead to the conclusion that abstinence from food for ten or twelve days will result in starvation and death," she wrote. "This is easily refuted. On my lists are considerably over one thousand instances of continuous fasts whose limits extend from ten to seventy-five days. While I esteem and consider but one cause and but one disease, the symptoms expressed in this long roll cover virtually the whole of medical pathology."

She acknowledged that her methods were *not* a miracle cure. "In twelve years . . . eleven patients have died while under my care," she wrote, and she admitted that "each of these deaths has proved an occasion for persecution, malignment, prosecution, and injury." However, "from each and every case, both I and the method have emerged triumphant, the autopsy showing

organic disease, and that death was inevitable."

Her methods were simple and really not that far divorced from the old maxim of "starve a cold, feed a fever" (or is it the other way around? Incredibly, even among the people who adhere religiously to the tenet, there is no common consensus!). Hazzard advocated allowing the digestive system to "rest," instituting a "natural cleaning process" that would result in the expulsion of all the impurities that caused sickness. "A fresh foundation is there to work upon—a new and thoroughly cleansed body, ready to take up its labors, and with proper hygienic and dietic care, to carry them on indefinitely."

It didn't work. Or, rather, it worked too well. Disease was indeed extinguished, but so was life, a fatal flaw that ensures Hazzard merits all the notoriety that surrounds her today, and that includes her inclusion alongside Elizabeth Bathory, the so-called Blood Countess of Hungarian horror history, in an episode of the Discovery Channel's *Deadly Women* series, recounting the escapades of, indeed, deadly women.

Recruiting her patients via both word of mouth and discreet advertisements placed in the most genteel publications, Dr. Hazzard operated out of the sanatorium she had constructed in the small town of Olalla, the aptly named Wilderness Heights. Even at its height, however, the locals knew it as Starvation Heights, a name that seems to have been coined by the locals very early on, after the first few patients attempted to escape the crucifying regimen that the sanatorium deemed to be their treatment.

Meals, if they could even loosely be described as such, comprised of eight ounces of watered down soup (either tomato or asparagus), and a few mouthfuls of orange juice a day. Hazzard herself was a vegetarian, so it only followed that her dietary recommendations followed that same discipline—to an excessive degree, of course.

Reading the descriptions of Hazzard's patients, in the words of either the shocked Olalla residents or horrified family members, one is reminded of the first newspaper reports to emerge from the death camps of the Holocaust, literal human skeletons with barely the energy to move. And certainly no strength to resist the Hazzards' insistence that they sign this little piece of paper that looked an awful lot like a will.

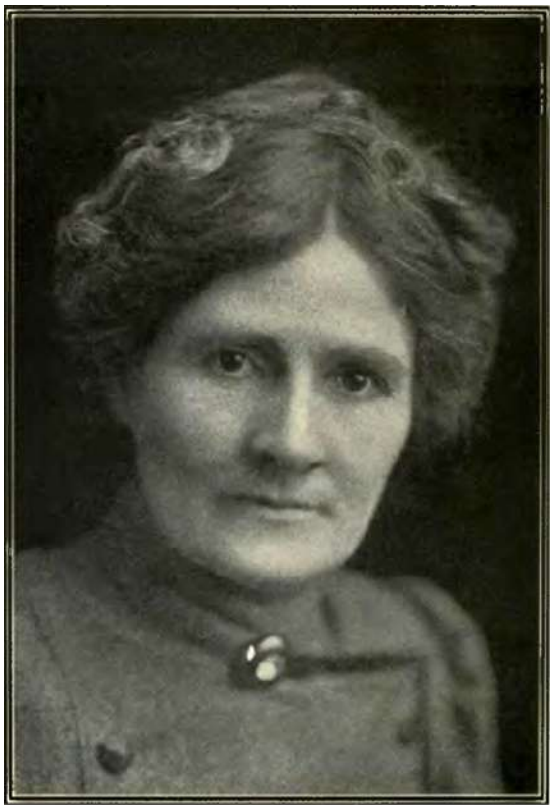
It was the sister of one of her victims, a woman named Claire Williamson, who brought about the end of Hazzard's practices. Dora Williamson was also

under the doctor's care, but unlike her sister, had retained sufficient strength that she was able to contact a family member, their uncle John, and plead for rescue.

He arrived too late to save Claire, whose body weighed a pitiful fifty pounds at the time of her death, and he was forced to battle, too, against the layers of bureaucracy with which the law insulated Hazzard—or, indeed, any certified medical professional. But Dora recovered sufficiently to testify against Hazzard, and in one of the most dramatic trials that Puget Sound area had ever seen, the evidence piled up not only against Hazzard, but also against those whom the legal system now viewed as being complicit in her crimes . . . including the local undertakers! They, the judge remarked at one point, had certainly gained a lot of business from Starvation Heights.

Reminding us of a style of newspaper headline that has sadly fallen far from fashion today, the *Tacoma Times* trumpeted the jury's verdict with a triumphant "Fast Fiend is Guilty"; while naturally reveling in the sheer grotesque theater that Hazzard's practice had clearly entailed.

"Mrs. Hazzard sold dead Claire Williamson's teeth . . . for a few paltry dollars after death had come," declared another story in that same paper, establishing a tone of reportage that was so sensationalist that certain of her supporters even sought to convince the watching world that Hazzard had been found guilty not by law, but by the media. "The *Times* at Seattle tried the case before the issues were made up," insisted one lawyer. "The jurors had read the *Times*. The most bitter articles had appeared at the greatest length and with most frequent recurrence."



Linda Hazzard—doctor, dietician and apparent mass murderer.

Internet Archive/Wikimedia Commons

But Frank Kelly, the prosecutor, was quick to respond (again in the pages of the *Seattle Times*), "This case will, I believe, be a death blow to quack medical and healing individuals and institutions throughout the country."

And so it should have been. Yet incredibly, it wasn't. Dr. Hazzard received a couple of years in prison, and then emigrated to New Zealand. There she flourished, setting herself up as a physician, dietician and osteopath, and publishing a new book about her beliefs, *Diet in Disease and Systemic Cleansing*. By 1920, she was even back in Olalla, not merely to reopen Wilderness Heights, but to expand it. A whole new sanatorium was erected, so vast and beautiful that it actually placed Olalla on the tourist map for the first time, a draw for all the new motor car owners who were then emerging across the country.

Hazzard did not entirely return to her old ways, but there were several run-ins with the law, and in 1925 she was accused of practicing medicine without a license after one of her patients, a Chehalis farmer named Leonard Ritter, passed away in the care of her "school of health." An eighty-four-day fast

had seen him lose over one-third of his original 168-pound body weight, but although Hazzard was found guilty, she received nothing more than a $100 fine.

A Taste (or Not) of Her Own Medicine

It would be another decade before she was finally stopped, when fire tore through Wilderness Heights, and even so she continued on for a time. The sanatorium burned in 1935, but the following year the now septuagenarian Linda Hazzard was up before the judge once again, for practicing medicine and osteopathy without a license.

Hazzard died, as aforementioned, from self-inflicted starvation in June 1938, a skeleton whose body was so ravaged by her own administration of her beliefs that even her bowels had stopped working decades before. She lived off thin broth and willpower, and maybe the latter is what sustained her even after her death, for reports that she still walked Starvation Heights were common long before the modern age brought her story back to the public awareness.

Nor was she alone. The cottage that had been the Hazzards' home throughout the lifetime of both sanatoriums—the original gathering of huts and outbuildings, and the grand pile that died in flames—was still standing in the mid-2000s (when it was finally demolished to make way for a new house), and throughout the intervening decades, voices, figures and cries were heard ringing out from both within and without.

The cottage had seen its own share of death, after all; both Claire Williamson and Hazzard herself were numbered among those who passed away there. But the grounds, too, were alive with activity—both the known dead, whose bodies were returned to the relatives who mourned them, and the unknown . . . those unnamed, unmarked others that legend had always insisted were quietly interred by the Hazzards after dark, and whose voices whimpered "dig us up" when members of WSPIR, Washington State Paranormal Investigations and Research, arrived to investigate Wilderness Heights in May 2005.

Some bodies, say local rumor, were thrown into a ravine on the property. Others were reduced to ashes in the sanatorium's incinerator or were chopped into easily disposable pieces by Linda Hazzard herself, using her own ironing

board and bathtub as her work area.

No matter how they were mistreated at the end, however, it was merely a final indignity heaped upon the manifold ways in which they were abused before that, while they still lay alive and conscious beneath the doctor’s care. If their spirits do still haunt Starvation Heights, one really should not be surprised.

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The Ghostly Gazetteer: Maryland to Massachusetts

Icicle Imagery and Ichorous Atmospheres

A sea captain who lost his head in a shipwreck on **Outer Heron Island**, off the Maine coast, still searches for his missing part today.

The nineteenth-century poet Sylvester Beckett remains in permanent residence of Beckett's Castle, in **Cape Elizabeth, Maine**.

Reports that dark figures and childlike laughter had occasionally been witnessed in the town hall in **Cornish, Maine**, were vindicated in November 2014, when it was discovered that remains still survived from the old cemetery that had supposedly been cleared before building began in the 1920s. The oldest grave dated to 1810 and at least one of the skeletons removed belonged to a child.

A mysterious figure in a centuries-old tree at Fort William Henry in **Bristol, Maine**, is said to be the ghost of the Native American chief Taukolexis, hanged from that same tree in 1696.

Two little girls, sisters, who died after falling into an abandoned well, have been seen playing in front of the Chute Road Cemetery in **Windham, Maine**.

Late-1970s building work on the old movie house in **Skowhegan, Maine**, is usually blamed for awakening a spirit who proceeded to make life very difficult for the workers engaged on the project.

A three-legged Siberian husky dog haunts Loon Pond in **Acton, Maine**.

Isolated and beautiful, Mattakeunk Pond, in **Bucksport, Maine**, is home to the spirit of the murdered Sally Weir, a nineteenth-century maid.

A witch is said to haunt the North Bowdoin Cemetery in **Bowdoin, Maine**. Another witch, hanged in **York, Maine**, walks that town's museum.

Another of J. R. Pepper's ghostly ghost shots. "I took some of the 'ghosts' to a chain pharmacy for a last minute print. It was late and there were only two people working there. The kid in the photo lab asked me if it was real when he saw the resulting print. I figured I'd have some fun with it. I told him 'yes' and explained my parents lived in a haunted old brownstone and they hear things all the time. I've never seen a sixteen-year-old so baffled before."

© *J. R. Pepper*

A Revolutionary War–era reveler, celebrating the end of the conflict by ensuring everybody's glass was full, still wanders the streets of **Rockport, Maine**, so highly intoxicated that he may not even have been aware that he once took a fatal plunge from the Goose River bridge.

A former clerk still goes about his business in the Kennebunk Inn, in **Kennebunk, Maine**.

According to a May 1886 edition of the *Baltimore American*, Peg Alley's Point—a narrow strip of woodland by **Miles River, Maryland**—is haunted by the wife of one of the oystermen who used to frequent the area, and who

battered her to death when she followed him to work one night. The phantom "was very poorly clad in a faded calico dress, and wore a limp sun-bonnet, from beneath which her thin, jet-black hair straggled down on her shoulders; her face was thin and sallow and her eyes black and piercing."

A grotesquely deformed baby, thrown into the river by his heartbroken mother, haunts Cry Baby Bridge in **Millington, Maryland**.

A feral mule, known to attack fishermen and loggers in what is now the **Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge** in Maryland, was chased into quicksand, into which it slowly sank and drowned. Now its furious spirit walks Church Creek, and these days it runs from nothing.

A Civil War soldier, buried upside down in the grounds of Mount Saint Mary's college in **Emmitsburg, Maryland**, alerts passersby to his plight by crying, "Turn me over!" At another local school, Civil War–era nurses carrying buckets full of amputated limbs allegedly haunted St. Joseph's College, a Catholic girls school that was used as a hospital during the conflict.

A white lady walks the Yellow Turtle Inn in **New Windsor, Maryland**.

It is decades since a prostitute named Amy passed away at the Rams Head Tavern in **Annapolis, Maryland**. But she is seen and felt there still.

A little girl haunts the nineteenth floor of the Lord Baltimore Hotel in **Baltimore, Maryland**.

When grocer's daughter Mary Berger learned that her parents had forbidden her to see her boyfriend ever again, she hanged herself. And now she haunts what was the family business in **Ellicott City, Maryland**.

The spirits of slaves still move among the trees of the **Pocomoke State Forest, Maryland**.

Just before the Delaware state line in **Whaleyville, Maryland**, a gnarled old cypress tree is said to mark the burial place of a witch—who doesn't take

kindly to being visited.

Three centuries have seen countless changes afflict the private home in **Groton, Massachusetts**, that was built in 1703 around the remains of an earlier house that was burned by marauding Native Americans. But at least into the 1980s, one particular downstairs room never felt unoccupied, even when it was. In the same town, the now lost Groton Inn boasted several resident spirits, including one that would open and close the door to the bar.

Darkness falls over the Old Burial Ground in Groton, Massachusetts. The residents will be rising soon.
Photo by Amy Hanson

Lizzie Borden took an axe, gave her mother a decidedly unpoetic seventeen whacks. When she saw what she had done, she gave her father an equally disappointing eleven. But no matter, for **Fall River, Massachusetts**, has had a haunted murder house ever since, and a convincing one, too, as photographer J. R. Pepper recalls:

> A dear friend and I stayed in the main bedroom of the Lizzie Borden house; I had been terribly freaked out even though I was the one who

requested we stay there.

The house tour had all the horror movie clichés—the rocking chair, the child's toys, the creepy basement, the cold rooms, creaking floors—so I'm sure all these influenced my apprehension. I woke up in the middle of the night because I swore something had grabbed my ankle. We wound up sleeping with the lights on the whole rest of the night.

Was it, however, all really as cut and dried as all that? Author Cherie Priest's spellbinding *Maplecroft* novel (2014) suggests that it may not have been.

A Revolutionary War soldier named Jake may tug at your coattails when you visit the Knox Trail Inn in **Otis, Massachusetts**.

The oldest inn on **Cape Cod, Massachusetts**, the Old Yarmouth Inn, was established in 1696, and has been said to be haunted for almost as long.

Sarah Dimmick, daughter of the family that first ran the Village Green Inn in **Falmouth, Massachusetts**, died in 1823, but she continues to haunts her old sleeping quarters and is still dressed for bed.

A colonial horseman rides the course of what was the Old Dudley Oxford Road as it passes through **Billerica, Massachusetts**.

The Birch Hill Dam project more or less erased the village of **New Boston, Massachusetts** from the map during the 1940s. All that remains is the old town cemetery, in the Otter River State Forest. Well, that and the ghosts . . .

A little girl regularly borrows items from guests staying in Room Four at the eighteenth-century New Boston Inn in **Sandisfield, Massachusetts**.

Much of **Salem, Massachusetts**, can point to a spectral history, but it is the Witch House, the former home of Judge Jonathan Corwin, that sees the most activity—and not surprisingly. Not only is it the only structure left that has direct ties to the 1692 witch trials, it was Corwin who undertook the investigations that led up to them.

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Promised Land Ahoy!

The Ghostly Queens of the Seas

Hardin, Ill., Sept. 18.—For some time past rumors have been circulated . . . to the effect that Diamond Island, in the river about two miles from this place, was the home of a ghost. The stories concerning the movements of the alleged spook were, of course, not given any credence at first, but later, when several reputable citizens of Hardin announced that they had positively seen an uncanny looking object moving about on the island at night, the rumors were more seriously considered. Now, after investigation, the mysterious something is no longer considered a myth.

Along toward midnight a peculiar light is seen at the foot of the island. It has the appearance of a huge ball of fire, and is about the size and shape of an ordinary barrel.

A few nights ago a party of young men from this place determined to visit the island and fathom the mystery if possible. Equipped with revolvers, knives, shotguns, and clubs, the party secured a boat and were soon cutting through the water at a good speed for a point on the island near where the specter usually made its appearance. Arriving at the landing place, the skiff was hauled up on the shore and the young men took up a position in a clump of trees close at hand to watch and wait.

Suddenly the whole point of the island was illumined as a bright red object rose apparently from the water and glided up into the air. Ascending probably to a height of forty yards, the watchers saw the lurid ball fade away. The investigating party had seen all they wanted. They made a mad rush for the boat, but, just as they reached the place where it had been left, they were horrified to see the little craft moving out on the water from the island. At first its only occupant seemed to be the red ball of fire, but the next

moment the watchers saw the crimson object gradually take the form of a man, and they saw him, too, dip the oars at regular intervals and pull a long, steady stroke. The man's features were fully concealed by a wide-rimmed slouch hat, which was drawn over his face. A peculiar light illumined the boat and the waters around it, making the craft and its mysterious occupant perfectly discernible to the party on the shore, who stood paralyzed with fear, unable to speak or move, their eyes riveted by some mysterious influence they could not resist on the spectral object before them.

The boat was now about in midstream, and suddenly the group of watchers saw the skiff's occupant change again into the crimson ball. Then it slowly began to move upward, and when it was about parallel with the tops of the trees on the island it disappeared. Next instant the watchers looking across the river saw nothing but the flickering lights in Hardin.

The cries of the crowd on the island awakened a sleeping fisherman on the opposite side of the river, and he kindly pulled across and rescued the ghost-seeking youths. The fiery spook, it is said, still makes its nightly trips to Diamond Island, but no more investigating parties have ventured across to solve the mystery.

It is said that some years ago a foul murder was committed on this island, and by the superstitious the crimson object is believed to be the restless spirit of the slain man.

—*St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, September 18, 1888

A floating palace of art deco splendor, the most luxurious ocean liner in the world, the queen not only of the Atlantic but of all the seven seas as well, the RMS *Queen Mary* was launched in 1934 and remained in service until 1967.

Bigger, faster and more powerful than any other vessel afloat, she made no fewer than 1,001 Atlantic crossings, transporting the likes of the Duke and Duchess of Windsor, Sir Winston Churchill, Greta Garbo, Clark Gable, Mary Pickford, the Gershwins . . . legends of politics and stars of stage and screen alike. When war broke out in 1939, she was converted into a troop ship and, by the time returned six years later, she had transported more than eight hundred thousand troops, covered more than six hundred thousand miles and played a significant role in just about every major Allied campaign of the war. On one journey alone, she carried a staggering 16,683 people.

During 1945–1946, the *Queen Mary* transported more than twenty-two

thousand war brides and their children to the United States and Canada, the so-called “Bride and Baby Voyages,” and in 1947, refurbished to her former glory, she resumed her transatlantic journeying. Later, as air travel came to replace the old oceangoing vessels, she was adapted for cruises before finally, in 1967, she was withdrawn from service and sold for $3.45 million to the city of Long Beach, California, to be transformed into a floating hotel and maritime museum. One whose guests include a lifetime’s worth of spirits.

No fewer than 150 different ghosts are said to walk the *Queen Mary*’s cabins, decks and passageways, with the most recent dating from just a year before the ship was retired. Eighteen-year-old John Pedder was a young merchant seaman, crushed to death during a safety drill by the aptly numbered watertight Door 13 in Shaft Alley in July 1966. Neither was he this particular door’s first victim. Bearded in blue overalls, John’s unknown predecessor, too, walks the vessel; he is known to people who have seen him as “half hatch Harry.”

A baby cries in the third-class children’s playroom; and tragedy is recalled in what was once the second-class swimming pool. A little girl named Jackie was drowned here, but continues to play and laugh. Another little girl, clutching her teddy bear, stands by the first-class pool, where other spirits too play—women in 1930s-style swimming suits who wander the decks near the pool, splash in the water and leave wet footprints heading toward the old changing rooms.

A former British naval training vessel, the *Arethusa* (rear of photo) is now berthed at New York’s

South Street Seaport, crewed still by the spirits of her past inhabitants.

Photo by Sheila Thompson

A beautiful woman in an elegant white evening gown dances alone in a corner of the ship's original first-class lounge; a handsome dark-haired man in a 1930s suit walks the first-class state rooms. He may or may not also be responsible for the lights that turn on, the bathwater that runs and the telephones that ring without explanation in the night.

The peace of Cabin B340 is benighted by a murdered purser; while Cabin 672, in the first-class area, still echoes to the screams of a bursar whom the captain incarcerated there on a voyage in 1938, after the man apparently went insane. When the ship docked in New York and the cabin was unlocked, the man was found to be dead, apparently of fright.

And so on. There are thousand-year-old castles that have fewer ghosts than the *Queen Mary*, but perhaps the most dramatic of all the phantoms that haunt the old girl is not a crewman or a passenger. It is the HMS *Curacoa*—a four-thousand-ton light cruiser.

In early October 1942, the *Curacoa* was one of several ships escorting the *Queen Mary* across the Atlantic with her cargo of ten thousand American troops. The journey was almost at an end; the Irish coast was just forty or so miles away, but the *Queen Mary* was still steaming the zigzag course that was intended to confound the German U-boats that made transatlantic travel so dangerous. It was while she was in the midst of one such maneuver that the *Queen Mary* smashed into the *Curacoa* at a speed of twenty-eight knots.

Literally sliced into two, the cruiser sank in just six minutes, no more than one hundred yards from the *Queen Mary*. But, because of the danger of watching, lurking, enemy submarines, there was nothing that anybody on board either the troop carrier or the other ships in the escort could do. The troops had to be delivered to England. It would be several hours before rescue vessels could be sent out to the scene, where they were found less than one third of the *Curacoa*'s 338 strong crew still alive in the dark, icy ocean. The screams of the lost men, as well as that roar of the impact itself, are both to be heard around the *Queen Mary*'s bow today.

The Navy's Nasties

If the *Queen Mary* can be described among the legends of international

luxury shipping, the USS *Constellation* is one of the legends of American history. Launched in August 1854 and commissioned the following year, the USS *Constellation* was the second United States warship to bear that name (following the 1797 frigate scrapped in the same year as her work began on her namesake). Destined to serve until 1933, and then recommissioned in 1940 as a national symbol, this beautiful old sloop has laid at rest in Baltimore since 1963, a National Historic Landmark, the last surviving intact veteran of the Civil War . . . and as haunted as she ought to be.

Or ought not. Illustrious though her past unquestionably is, the USS *Constellation* saw surprisingly little action throughout her years of service. Her earliest years at sea were spent with the US Mediterranean Squadron, fulfilling diplomatic duties before she became the flagship of the African Squadron. In that role she was a part of the Lincoln administration's drive against the slave trade, targeted at its very source and, between 1859 and 1861, the *Constellation* halted three slave ships as they set out from the African coast.

She remained Mediterranean bound throughout the Civil War, a deterrent against any Confederate vessels that might also be in those waters, but much of the remainder of her career was spent operating as a floating barracks and a training ship. Small wonder, then, that the best known of what we might call her permanent crew would appear to be the spirit of one of her earliest captains, returning in full period uniform to make sure all remains shipshape.

The captain was first sighted aboard in 1955, one of several phenomenon registered by onlookers following the USS *Constellation*'s arrival in Baltimore. Lights were seen on board when none should have been lit, while crew members aboard the *Constellation*'s neighbor, the Navy submarine *Pike*, also heard mysterious noises, and saw unidentified figures walking the new arrival's decks.

Nine years later, a Catholic priest reported receiving a full guided tour of the vessel from an old sailor whom he took to be a tour guide—but who had already vanished into thin air. He is said to have been Carl Hansen, at that time the ship's only-recently deceased watchman.

Perhaps the strangest aspect of the USS *Constellation*'s many hauntings, however, is that the vast majority of the ghosts attributed to her were in fact crew members of her predecessor.

The confusion arises from what is, in fact, one of the vessel's own

mysteries. The original *Constellation* was being dismantled in the same yard, and at the same time, as the new one was being built. Despite being very different types of vessel, the suggestion that the one was a deliberate rebuild of the other has long enthralled historians and students. At the present time, the accepted line seems to be that they were two very separate vessels. But the ghosts who allegedly haunt the sloop do not seem particularly perturbed by any substitution. Or by any explanation. They are the ghosts of the *Constellation*, and they haunt the *Constellation*. So as far as they are concerned . . . case closed.

The oldest of the migrant spirits is said to be a seaman named Neil Harvey, who was court-martialed for cowardice in 1799. Apparently, he fled his assigned station at one of the cannon during a battle with the French frigate *Insurgente*, a charge upon which he was found guilty and sentenced to a particularly grisly onboard death.

First, Harvey was run through with a sword by one Lieutenant Starrett, and then—still living—he was tied to the muzzle of a cannon. Which was then discharged at point-blank range. A shimmering, shapeless mass seen on the ship's orlop desk—the lowest deck of the vessel, where the cables were stored—is generally identified as the hapless Harvey.

Captain Thomas Truxtun, under whose watch Harvey was executed, is widely believed to be overseeing the vessel still, while the ghost of a child, seen in the cockpit of that same orlop deck, is said to be the surgeon's eleven-year-old assistant, knifed to death for reasons unknown by two other sailors in 1820.

And then there is the suicide, a sailor who supposedly hanged himself because he could no longer stand to live within the awful conditions that were shipboard life at the time . . . only to discover that even death could not spare him those surroundings. He haunts the gun and forecastle decks.

The *Constellation* has busy crew, to be sure, but it is a far from unique one. A latter-day descendant of another historic naval name, the USS *Hornet* is today to be found at the decommissioned Alameda Naval Base, but she feels just as haunted as the *Constellation.*

The *Hornet* was commissioned in 1943 at the very height of the war in the Pacific, and over the next two years of combat, this mighty aircraft carrier established herself as one of the most lethal, and consequently most highly decorated ships in the US Navy. No fewer than 1,410 Japanese aircraft and

1,269,710 tons of enemy shipping were destroyed or damaged by the *Hornet*, and ten of her pilots attained "Ace in a Day" status.

Her actions took their toll on her crew as well, though. Aircraft carriers, even in peace times, are a dangerous place, prone to the mishaps of both sea and air. Many of the ghosts that haunt the Great Lakes are the crew and pilots who perished during the earliest experiments with these leviathans of the fleet, their aircraft overshooting the "runways" that the vessels provided them; or underestimating their speed and trajectory.

The "arrest cables," the vast metal lines that are employed to help halt a landing aircraft, can and do snap, and at least three of the *Hornet*'s crew members lost their lives in this fashion.

Unwary men have walked into an aircraft's spinning propeller; have been sucked into their air intakes; and been blown, burning, overboard by the fiery breath of their exhaust. Over three hundred of the *Hornet*'s own men died during her years of service, with their numbers swollen by one particular statistic that ranks among the most unenviable. The USS *Hornet* has the highest suicide rate of any Navy vessel ever.

The catalog of attendant hauntings is likewise breathtaking, a litany that runs the gamut from the mysteriously opening and slamming of doors, through flying or disappearing objects, unaccountable cold spots, and on to full apparitions.

A fascinating interview with one witness, electrician Deek Lyon-McKeil, appeared in the December 2000 issue of *Naval History Magazine*. He told journalist Lily MacKenzie, "We'd all just bunked down, and we had a rule. No exploring. All of a sudden, I heard this banging noise like someone was opening the hatches who shouldn't have been. Peter Clayton, our supervisor, came charging around, saying, 'Okay, who's sneaking around opening hatches?' We realized that everyone in the group was there. As we were all standing there staring at each other, we heard it again."

Another incident was recorded by *San Jose Mercury News* writer Dana Hull, reporting on a shipboard lecture by a visiting psychic. "I saw what I saw," said witness Alan McKean. "An officer in khakis descending the ladder to the next deck. I followed him and he was gone. I have no explanation for it."

Ghostly seamen haunt many of the world's oldest ships. Apparently quiet now, as she lies peaceably in her berth at the Seaport Museum in New York

City, the old British clipper *Peking* was allegedly home to a number of spirits during her years as a naval training vessel, the *Arethusa*, in Upnor, a picturesque village on the River Medway in England.

There are ghosts aplenty recorded at the memorials to Pearl Harbor in Hawaii, and more to be heard (or at least heard about) around the scenes of other major maritime disasters.

The massive munitions explosion at Black Tom Island in New York Harbor on July 30, 1916, is believed to have killed just seven people, and that despite some two million pounds of stored explosives igniting, in a blast that registered five on the Richter scale; which was felt as far away as Philadelphia; and which broke windows twenty-five miles away in New York City.

The miraculously minuscule death toll, however, was balanced by the sheer psychic shock of the explosion, all the more so as rumor (later revealed to be accurate) insisted that it had been sabotage, pro-German agents working to prevent American munitions being sent to aid the Allied cause in war-wracked Europe.

The glow of the fires and the roar of the explosions, it is said, can still be seen and heard on summer nights today, and while skeptics might argue that witnesses are simply misidentifying leftover July Fourth celebrations, such explanations cannot so easily dismiss the silhouettes of vast, burning warships that have also been seen reflected in the harbor waters. Which is doubly wonderful, as there were not actually any such vessels involved.

There again, ghost ships have rarely been concerned with verisimilitude.

The Flying Dutchman

The legend of the Flying Dutchman is the world’s best known such tale, dating back to the year 1641 when a Dutch ship was returning home from a very successful trip to the Far East. Rounding the Cape of Good Hope, at the foot of Africa, the captain was apparently so lost in thought regarding his heroic homecoming that he utterly failed to notice a ferocious storm that had crept up on the vessel. Only the screams of the lookout as the vessel sailed directly into the maw of the storm alerted him to the danger and, for hours on end, captain and crew wrestled to keep the vessel afloat.

Their efforts were in vain. The ship ran onto rocks, was fatally holed and

began to sink. But even as the wild ocean closed over his head for the final time, the captain continued mouthing the words that had sustained him throughout the entire battle. “I *will* round this cape, even if I have to sail until doomsday!”

He was true to his word. After almost four centuries, the Flying Dutchman remains one of the most oft-sighted specters in history, with witnesses running the gamut from vacationers on board the massive cruise ships that now routinely make the passage that once filled mariners with such terror, to the wartime crew of a German U-boat patrolling those same waters in search of victims of their own. Admiral Karl Doenitz, commander of Germany’s U-boats, wrote, “Certain of my U-boat crews claimed they saw the Flying Dutchman or some other so-called phantom ships on their tours of duty east of Suez.”

The Dutchman was even witnessed by a future king of England. In 1881, the youth who, thirty years later, would be crowned George V, was serving aboard the Royal Navy ship *Bacchante*—although perhaps the term “witness” is not a strictly accurate summation of the prince’s experience, for to actually lay eyes upon the Flying Dutchman is to die within days.

Rather, Prince George was a midshipman aboard the vessel; it was a lowly lookout who actually saw the Dutchman, leaving George merely to record his words. “A strange red light as of a phantom ship all aglow, in the midst of which light the mast, spars and sails of a brig two hundred yards distant stood out in strong relief.”

Days later, the midshipman fell from a masthead and perished.

Admiral Doenitz’s reference to “other so-called phantom ships” reminds us that the Flying Dutchman is only the best known of myriad legends of this sort. Cape Horn, at the foot of South America, was for centuries infested by an unnamed sail ship, apparently crashing into the deadly black cliffs of the Straits of Le Maire. Other vessels, fortuitously passing by, would hasten to her aid—only for the wrecked ship to disappear, and for her would-be rescuers themselves to be wrecked.

For centuries, this legend persisted, so much so that, in 1907, the United States government formally asked Argentina to investigate the phenomenon. They did so, and they laid the ghost to rest in one savage blow. The phantom ship, the investigators determined, was merely a single great white rock, rising up out of the sea in the shadow of the deadly black cliffs.

Nobody ever went to its rescue again.

Other phantoms are not so easy to explain away, however.

America’s Phantom Flotilla

Ghost ships proliferate in American waters. New Hampshire’s Isle of Shoals is haunted by the schooner *White Rover*. August fogs in Casco Bay in Maine likely conceal the *Dash*, a vessel that disappeared without trace in 1812, taking sixty souls with her. A blazing ship is regularly sighted off Cape Cod following a storm.

And another ghostly schooner rides the waves off Harpswell, Maine, fully rigged and under sail, soaring over the sea before vanishing in a blaze of light or a sudden cloud of fog. As the nineteenth-century poet and abolitionist John Greenleaf Whittier wrote, opening his poem *The Dead Ship of Harpswell*, “What flecks the outer gray beyond / The sundown’s golden trail? / The white flash of a sea-bird’s wing, / Or gleam of slanting sail?”

This particular story begins in the Soule Boatyard in South Freeport, Maine, where two Portland traders, George Leverett and Charles Jose, were engaged in the construction of a boat.

All went well. But then a woman came between the lifelong friends. Sarah Soule was a daughter of the owner of the boatyard, and both men fell in love with her. It was Leverett who won her heart, and with his erstwhile partner disappearing after one final argument, it was Leverett who oversaw the completion of the boat, which he named the *Sarah*, of course.

The happy couple began making preparations for their wedding, only to run into constant misfortune. Petty obstacles tripped every arrangement for the marriage; just as difficulties surrounded every attempt to gather a crew for the *Sarah*. And even when both events had finally been accomplished and the *Sarah* was at sea, ill portents continued to dog the journey. Portents that ultimately resolved themselves in the form of the *Don Pedro Salazar*, a mysterious black boat that flew no flag, but let it be known very soon that her master was Charles Jose, Captain Leverett’s embittered rival for Sarah’s hand. And he was ready for action; the cannon on the vessel’s deck proved that.

Desperately Leverett fought to outrun his pursuer, fleeing down the coast toward the Bahamas with the *Don Pedro Salazar* in silent, menacing pursuit.

His efforts were in vain. A volley of cannon fire tore through the crew of the *Sarah*, killing every man but Leverett. Jose then boarded the ship and, having looted the vessel, he tied Leverett to the mast and pointed the stricken vessel out toward the open ocean. She would sail until she sank.

Or so he believed. He reckoned, however, without the *Sarah*'s dead crew, rising from where they fell to steer the boat back to Maine. At least, that is what Leverett said, when he was carried ashore by the rescue party that boarded the becalmed and deserted vessel as she rocked, anchorless but unmoving, at Pott's Point.

They believed him, too, for there was no other explanation.

Sightings of the *Sarah* are rare; indeed, there has not been one verified since the 1880s, when she appeared in full glory to two guests at Harpswell House. But she lives on in Whittier's words—much as another grand old dame of the spectral seas, the *Princess Augusta*, lives on in another of the great man's verses.

Whittier's "The Palatine" appeared in *The Atlantic Monthly* in 1867, the story of a vessel purposefully lured, over a century before, onto the rocks of Block Island, on the Rhode Island coast. Broken and helpless, she was then descended upon by rapacious islanders who mercilessly plundered the stricken ship . . .

> . . . like birds of prey
> Tearing the heart of the ship away
> And the dead never had a word to say
> And then, with a ghastly shimmer and shine
> Over the rocks and the seething brine,
> They burned the wreck of the Palatine.

Small wonder, then, that every year, on the Saturday that falls between Christmas and New Year's Day, the *Palatine*'s ghost now haunts those same waters, bursting into flame and sinking into the ocean, a dreadful reminder of the islanders' terrible crime.

Or so it is said.

The story was not invention. Not completely. A boat called *Princess Augusta* was indeed lost on Block Island shortly after Christmas 1738, although it was not the islanders who wrecked her, but the ship's own crew.

Laden with German immigrants—hence the legend's misappropriation of the term "palatine"—the Atlantic crossing had been long and arduous, scarred by illness, bad weather and inadequate provisions.

Many of the crew died during the journey; those who survived had done their best to save the ship, but they were unable to prevent her from being wrecked on the Block Island rocks. And the islanders, far from looting the vessel as in Whittier's poem, were in fact responsible for rescuing as many of the passengers from the waters as they could, and ensuring a Christian burial for those who didn't make it—many of whom were already ill, and could not have survive the rigors of the night. A marker on the island's southwest side reads simply, "Palatine Graves—1738."

Local historian Samuel Livermore did his best to clear the islanders' reputation in his 1877 history of Block Island. "Poetic fiction has given the public a very wrong view of this occurrence, and thus a wrong impression of the Islanders has been obtained." Whittier, too, denied that he in any way intended to convey events as a factual occurrence.

But his version of events,
further colored by other legend and rumor, is the one that has survived—and which lives on in the stories that still surround the *Palatine*'s annual reappearances, wreathed in flames and soundtracked by the screams of its last remaining passenger, a mad woman who refused to leave the ship, even after it was set ablaze and washed back out to sea.

Another of William Hope's so, frankly, *unconvincing* spirit photographs.
Photo by William Hope/National Media Museum/Wikimedia Commons

Historian Livermore credits this aspect of the tale to a certain Dutch Kattern, one of the passengers who survived the journey and the wrecking, and who remained on Block Island thereafter. "A witch, an opium-eater, and a maniac," accused Livermore, "[she] had her revenge on the ship that put her ashore by imagining it on fire, and telling others, probably, that the light on the sound was the wicked ship *Palatine*, cursed for leaving her on Block Island."

And as for the source of that light in the first place? This is where things become really interesting. There *is* no explanation. It is simply a light of unknown origin that glows in the sky, far out to sea . . . which means it *could* be a blazing spectral boat, after all. Because that sounds an awful lot more interesting than some boring atmospheric effect, or the glow of the setting sun on the back of a school of migrating fish, which is how such things are usually explained away.

Besides, the *Palatine* is not the East Coast's sole blazing boat. Another sails Long Island Sound, a reminder of a vessel lost to marauding pirates back in

the age of Governor Peter Stuyvesant.

According to the legend, the ship was boarded, her crew and passengers slaughtered, and all the cargo and goods that the pirates could carry were transported back to their own vessel. Just one thing remained—a beautiful white horse that steadfastly refused to cross from one vessel to the other.

As if inviting, and certainly deserving, the most ghastly of fates to befall them, the pirates heartlessly tied the beast to the main mast, then set the ship ablaze, sailing away oblivious to the screams of the dying, burning horse.

But then the timbre of the animal's voice shifted, and turning back, the pirates saw that the boat, though she was still wreathed in flame, had miraculously repaired herself. Her blazing sails were full and billowing, her burning passengers still milled on the deck, her fiery crew steered the boat resolutely forward, in merciless pursuit of the pirates.

In some tales, they caught up with the pirates, crashing their blazing boat into that of their killers and taking them both to the bottom of the sea. In others, the pirates eluded capture, but every man lived the rest of his days in permanent fear of his pursuers returning. But in all retellings, the burning boat still sails those same waters, the only sound the screaming—or perhaps, it is laughter—of the beautiful white horse.

The Polar Bear Made Me Do It

Haunted ships are one thing. Haunted pictures of ships are something else.

In 1845, the British explorer Sir John Franklin led two ships and 129 men to an icy death while trying to chart the Northwest Passage in the Canadian Arctic. It would be almost 160 years before at least one of the vessels was rediscovered, in sonar images from the waters of Victoria Strait, just off King William Island.

Prior to that, the ships' fate had been a mystery, one best addressed by the arts on both sides of the Atlantic. In the United States, the expedition's disappearance was marked in Frederic Church's painting *The Icebergs*. In 1866, French author Jules Verne's *Journeys and Adventures of Captain Hatteras* was intended to retrace the journey of the Franklin expedition, in the hope of perhaps postulating their fate; in 2008, American novelist Clive Cussler drew upon the same mystery for his shocker *Arctic Drift*. There is a horror-themed role-playing game, *The Walker in the Wastes*, that is based

upon the expedition. And there is a painting, by the British artist Edwin Landseer, that is believed to have spent the last 150 years driving its viewers to failure, madness and worse.

"Cursed" paintings are not an unusual phenomenon. In the eighties in the UK, the legend circulated that a recent string of house fires all had a certain portrait, Italian painter Bruno Arnadio's *The Crying Boy*, in common. More recently, in 2010, the Internet was captivated by the suggestion that California artist Bill Stoneham's *The Hands Resist Him* was not only haunted, it also came to life at night, with its characters moving around and changing position.

Vague, unsettling feelings have apparently attended viewings of Henry Herbert La Thangue's *The Man with the Scythe*, although in this instance, the painting itself is creepy to begin with—it depicts a mother stepping out into the yard to discover that her daughter has just passed away, at the same time as the titular farm laborer, a coincidental Grim Reaper, of course, arrives at the gate.

Perhaps the most dramatic of all such tales, however, are those that surround Lanseer's *Man Proposes, God Disposes.*

First displayed in 1864, *Man Proposes, God Disposes* was one of the most controversial exhibits ever shown at London's annual Royal Academy exhibition. It is, bluntly and simply, an unforgiving portrait of two polar bears, one devouring a tattered ship's ensign, the other gnawing on a human ribcage.

The picture hangs today at Royal Holloway University of London, in one of the rooms where students sit to take their exams. And, according to legend, whoever sits directly in front of the painting is guaranteed to fail the test. Since the 1920s at least, the painting is said to have been responsible for scores of academic failures, its reputation growing so foul that, beginning in the early 1970s, tradition has insisted that the painting be covered with a massive British flag whenever the examination season roles around.

Man Proposes, God Disposes continues, however, to exert its baleful wrath, and it is likely to continue to do so, for as long as people remember its most terrible act to date. The student, so one version of the legend insists, who pulled back the flag and stared instead into the eyes of one of the polar bears.

She went *immediately* insane, ran from the room and killed herself. Her last words were later found scratched fearfully onto her exam paper.

“The polar bears made me do it.”

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The Ghostly Gazetteer: Missouri to Montana

A Jangle-Nerved Journey of Jelly-fied Jaws

The abandoned swimming pool off MO-231, outside **Oakville, Missouri**, is not as abandoned as it looks. Even with an empty pool, and nobody in the building, the sound of splashing water mingles with the laughter and shrieks of people having a wet and wonderful time.

Smoking bans don't get very far in the spirit world—or so the ciggy-loving Albert Carmean would have you believe, as he puffs merrily about his haunting business at the Grand Avenue bed and breakfast in **Carthage, Missouri**.

Henry Bugler was the sheriff of Jackson County when he was gunned down at the old jailhouse in **Independence, Missouri**. The original building is now the Marshal's Museum, but in his own mind, he may still be in charge.

A cloud of dark red smoke is the spirit that stalks **St. Louis, Missouri**'s Fort Belle Fontaine.

The Knights of Pythias built the castle that bears their name in **Springfield, Missouri**, in 1913, and its use as both an orphanage and a seniors' home has transformed it into quite the haunting hot spot.

A former Catholic girls school, the Arcadia Academy in **Arcadia, Missouri**, is still home to the nuns who once taught here.

A lady in black and a phantom whistle are among the spirits that still call Union Station in **Kansas City, Missouri**, their home. And elsewhere in town, WWE wrestler Owen Hart, killed when a stunt went wrong in 1999, is said to haunt the Kemper Arena, still clad in the distinctive outfit that gave him his nickname of the Blue Blazer.

A crying baby can be heard in the balcony of the Avenue Theatre in **West Plains, Missouri**.

J. R. Pepper's spectral studies both mystify and creep out the unsuspecting viewer.

© *J. R. Pepper*

In **Kearney, Missouri**, the Jesse James Farm is, somewhat unsurprisingly, said to be haunted by . . . well, various members of the James clan. Including Frank and Jesse's nine-year-old half brother, killed in the infamously botched Pinkerton's raid in 1875, their mother and the boys themselves. Nearby, a particularly grisly phantom is most likely to be the Pinkerton's own John W. Witcher, an agent shot by the James gang (allegedly) and then partially devoured by wild hogs.

The underground solitary confinement cells at the state prison in **Deer Lodge, Montana**, have a handful of restless spirits still seated around.

Whether the gates are locked or not, the old wheelchair-bound spirit in the Mount Moriah Cemetery in **Butte-Silver Bow, Montana**, can always find its way through them.

A workman who fell to his death during construction of the Fort Peck Theatre in **Fort Peck, Montana**, in 1934 still comes in to work every day.

At the Malmstrom Air Force base in **Great Falls, Montana**, an old-time fur trader is often seen in the chapel, holding a Bible that he then drops just before he disappears.

Grasshopper Creek runs past the ghost town of Bannack, near **Dillon, Montana**, and is haunted by a lady in a blue dress, known as Dorothy. Bannack itself is still home to an outlaw gang that was executed en masse in town.

Given that it is known locally as the House of Screams, it would be quite disappointing to discover that the Zakos House on South Fifth St. West in **Missoula, Montana**, was quiet. Fortunately, it isn't.

The former Orphan Girl Mine in **Butte, Montana**, is now the World Museum of Mining, and is haunted by a figure in a yellow jacket.

21

Life After Death in the White House

The Ultimate Presidential Veto

The Capitol at Washington is probably the most thoroughly haunted building in the world.

Not less than fifteen well-authenticated ghosts infest it, and some of them are of a more than ordinarily alarming character.

What particularly inspires this last remark is the fact that the Demon Cat is said to have made its appearance again, after many years of absence. This is a truly horrific apparition, and no viewless specter such as the invisible grimalkin that even now trips people up on the stairs of the old mansion which President Madison and his wife, Dolley, occupied, at the corner of Eighteenth Street and New York Avenue, after the White House was burned by the British. That, indeed, is altogether another story; but the feline spook of the Capitol possesses attributes much more remarkable, inasmuch as it has the appearance of an ordinary pussy when first seen, and presently swells up to the size of an elephant before the eyes of the terrified observer.

The Demon Cat, in whose regard testimony of the utmost seeming authenticity was put on record thirty-five years ago, has been missing since 1862. One of the watchmen on duty in the building shot at it then, and it disappeared. Since then, until now, nothing more has been heard of it, though one or two of the older policemen of the Capitol force still speak of the spectral animal in awed whispers.

—*Philadelphia Press*, October 2, 1898

The seat of government is a logical place for a spot of haunting. So many emotions are focused on its precepts, so many decisions taken that impact upon the lives of so many people, it would be more alarming if the likes of the Senate, the Capitol, even the Pentagon and the White House did not have

their resident spirits—human or otherwise. That those spirits should include some of the most powerful figures in American history simply goes with the territory.

The occasional demon cat notwithstanding, of course.

A builder who died during the construction of the United States Capitol is the oldest of the spirits who walk those hallowed halls; but he is scarcely the most remarkable, as he is joined in his perambulations by many of the statues in the Statuary Hall. Among them, and among those folk who have experienced them, the most eerie is said to be the ghostly footstep that will follow anybody who dares crosses Statuary Hall at night.

The Fearful Footsteps of John Quincy Adams

It was in this hall, during its time as the chamber of the House of Representatives, that former president John Quincy Adams died, on February 23, 1848, shortly after casting his vote on a debate on whether to refer a resolution to the Committee on Military Affairs. A brass tablet set in a stone slab marks the spot, and it is from this marker that the footsteps are often said to begin and once, according to the aforementioned edition of the *Philadelphia Press*, "a bold watchman attempted not long ago to investigate them on scientific principles.

"He suspected a trick, and so bought a pair of rubber shoes, with the aid of which he proceeded to examine into the question. In the stillness of the night he made a business of patrolling that portion of the principal Government edifice, and, sure enough, the footsteps followed along behind him. He cornered them; it was surely some trickster! There was no possibility for the joker to get away. But, a moment later, the steps were heard in another part of the hall; they had evaded him successfully. Similar experiments were tried on other nights, but they all ended in the same way."

Adams does not merely walk in a mysterious fashion, however. One nineteenth-century watchman issued a sworn statement that, as he passed through the hall, he witnessed the entire Thirtieth United States Congress of early 1848—Senate President George Dallas, House Speaker Robert C. Winthrop, Adams and Abraham Lincoln included, in action in the middle of the night! This same watchman was, apparently, later dismissed for drunkenness, but does that mean we should not believe anything he ever

said? There are those, after all, who would argue that the calming qualities of alcohol can actually open the eyes to the supernatural, when sobriety ensures they are kept closed.

Other Capitol ghosts include relics of the years during which the Library of Congress was housed there, crammed into what its users complained was a distinctly cramped corner, but which proved large enough for one of those users to return after death, guarding the fortune in registered United States bonds that he allegedly hid down there; and for another, a certain Mr. Twine, to still be hard at work checking out books to borrowers. You can, apparently, still hear him stamping the long-gone books, and still smell that peculiar mix of lampblack and alcohol with which he made his mark.

Sometimes an image doesn't need to show a ghost. The viewer will see one, regardless.

Lario Tus/Shutterstock.com

Henry Wilson, vice president for the first two years of Ulysses S. Grant's presidency (1873–1875), passed away in the Capitol, felled by a stroke on November 22, 1875. He wanders amiably enough around the building, it is said, never really bothering anybody. Except once, while a recently deceased

Tennessee senator was lying in state in the Senate Chamber. VP Wilson wandered through and, from all accounts, almost scared one of the watchmen to death!

So much for the specters of the Capitol. For even they pale into insignificance alongside their illustrious colleagues elsewhere in town. For who would disagree that the Executive Mansion is one of the most extraordinary haunted houses in America?

The White as a Sheet House

Its age and its history alone would ensure its status as a likely candidate for a ghost or two, whatever the nature of the lives conducted within its walls. The fact that the place is so central to American history, however, and its occupants so much a part of our nation's story only amplify its vitality, and that of its spectral inhabitants.

The sumptuous neoclassical mansion that stands at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue was designed by Irish-born architect James Hoban and built between 1792 and 1800. It has been the residence of every US president since John Adams (the father of the aforementioned John Quincy Adams) moved in in 1800; and it has remained in constant service with the exception of just a few years following the building's burning by British troops in 1814.

As early as 1817, however, President James Monroe was back living on the premises, not only sharing them with the builders who were still repairing and restoring the old fabric, but also with the architects who were planning the building's expansion. With successive presidents making their own additions to the building, and fresh renovations continuing into the Kennedy era, the White House could claim to be one of the most prestigious works-in-progress in the world.

However, it is not the whim of presidents and First Ladies alone that dictate such measures. Or so the second Mrs. Woodrow Wilson, Edith Bolling Galt, discovered shortly after she moved into the White House in 1915. That was when she ordered her gardeners to dig up the Rose Garden, a feature that had remained unchanged since it was first planned and laid out a century before by Dolley Madison, the wife of the fourth president, James Madison.

No sooner had the gardeners gathered to begin their work than Dolley Madison herself appeared, fifty years dead but feisty as hell, to warn them

off. The gardeners fled, the garden was reprieved, and the ferociously protective spirit of Ms. Madison (1768–1849) floated into legend to become one more in a long line of the White House's resident spirits.

Company, then, for Abigail Adams (1744–1818), the wife of the White House's first presidential resident, and the instigator of what today might seem a very peculiar tradition—the use of the East Room for drying laundry! Much of Washington was still swampland at the time, and the White House itself was damp and drafty despite its recent construction. Only the East Room remained dry, and so it became Abigail's favored drying room, and her spirit can apparently still be seen making its way there, in cap and lace shawl, with its arms filled with bundles of clothing.

If the First Ladies were the White House's first specters, they did not have the place to themselves for long, as 1845 brought the spirit of Andrew Jackson back home. The seventh president occupied the White House between 1829 and 1837, and for much of that time, he used the modern Rose Room as his sleeping quarters.

He apparently loved the room, too. Of course he stayed away from it throughout the eight years that separated his departure from the presidency from his departure from this life. But no sooner was he buried in the ground than he was ensconced back in the Rose Room, too—as Mary, the wife of Abraham Lincoln, delightedly informed her spiritualist friends.

Neither, she said, did he sound as though he were in a good mood. Rather, he raged, stomped and swore his way around the White House at night, tracing a route that always began and ended at the Rose Room, and doubtless putting the fear of God into any unsuspecting witness to his spectral tantrums.

Living with Lincoln

Abraham Lincoln himself is widely regarded as the White House's most active spirit. The sixteenth president occupied the building from 1861 until his death at the hands of assassin John Wilkes Booth on April 14, 1865, and the popular belief among the psychic community is that he has *never* left the building; that his spirit remains hard at work, trying to complete every one of the tasks that he intended accomplishing during that so brutally abbreviated second term; and making himself available, too, in times of national crisis.

Certainly there is no shortage of presidents, First Ladies, staff and guests

who believe they have either seen the Great Emancipator, or at least felt his presence. Nor would Lincoln himself have laughed at the notion that he still walked the White House. Not only was his wife Mary an ardent spiritualist, but the president himself was also a firm believer in the supernatural.

Indeed, according to his friend Ward Hill Lamon, Lincoln not only foresaw his own death, he also detailed it in a late night conversation with his friend.

"About ten days ago I retired very late . . ." the president told Lamon early in 1865.

> I soon began to dream. There seemed to be a deathlike stillness about me. Then I heard subdued sobs, as if a number of people were weeping. I thought I left my bed and wandered downstairs.
>
> There, the silence was broken by the same pitiful sobbing, but the mourners were invisible. I went from room to room. No living person was in sight, but the same mournful sounds of distress met me as I passed alone . . . I was puzzled and alarmed. Determined to find the cause of a state of things so mysterious and shocking, I kept on until I arrived at the East Room. Before me was a catafalque, on which rested a corpse wrapped in funeral vestments. Around it were stationed soldiers who were acting as guards; and there was a throng of people, some gazing mournfully upon the corpse, whose face was covered, others weeping pitifully.
>
> "Who is dead in the White House?' I demanded of one of the soldiers. "The president," was his answer. "He was killed by an assassin."

An earlier vision convinced both Lincoln and his wife that he would not live to see the end of his second term; and on the very day of his murder, Lincoln apparently summoned his Cabinet to the Council Chamber to warn them to expect "important news . . . tomorrow."

One of the earliest sightings of Lincoln's spirit, astonishingly, was photographic. In 1869, four years after her husband's murder, Mary Todd Lincoln sat for the renowned spirit photographer William H. Mumler (whose life and fascinating works we will be looking at in closer depth later in this book). He did not, apparently, know the identity of his subject, having been booked simply to photograph either a Mrs. Tundall or a Mrs. Lindall, depending upon which story one chooses to believe.

Either way, all concerned were utterly astonished when the developed photograph revealed the unmistakable figure of Abe rising up alongside his seated wife—unmistakable, that is, to all but Mary, who apparently required an awful lot of encouragement from Mumler's wife, herself a medium, before she would identify the figure as her late husband.

Since that time, residents as distinguished as Grace Coolidge, the wife of the thirtieth president Calvin Coolidge; Eisenhower's press secretary James Hagerty; and Lady Bird Johnson's press secretary Liz Carpenter have all either seen or felt Lincoln's spirit, most commonly standing at the window in the Oval Office, gazing out over the Potomac.

Among the White House's most stellar guests, Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands is even said to have opened her bedroom door to a midnight knock, and been confronted by the spirit of Lincoln standing there—she fainted on the spot. President Truman, spending the night in the same room, also heard the knocking but he didn't open the door.

British prime minister Winston Churchill, visiting the White House during the Second World War, also met the spirit—apparently as he, Churchill, stepped naked out of the bathtub and walked, dripping, into the adjoining bedroom. There he saw Lincoln standing by the fireplace, leaning on the mantel and regarding him with what one can only imagine was a most peculiar expression. Churchill, however, was not fazed. "Good evening, Mr. President," he said. "You seem to have me at a disadvantage." Lincoln smiled and disappeared.

Eleanor Roosevelt, who used Lincoln's former bedroom as a study, several times experienced the sensation that someone was standing at her shoulder watching her work, and she was in no doubt as to whom that someone was. Especially after her secretary, Mary Eben, saw Lincoln himself sitting on the bed in the northwest bedroom, pulling on his boots. The family dog, Fala, also seemed to sense when old Abe was round.

Other staff members during the Roosevelt administration were equally conscious of the late president's presence as they—and he—went about their business, while there is a persistent legend that it was the spirit of Lincoln whose warnings convinced Harry S. Truman to subject the White House itself to a major renovation—during which it was discovered that the old fabric had been on the point of collapse.

Lincoln is not the only member of his immediate family who is believed to

walk the White House. Just one of his three children survived to adulthood, with young Willie dying of fever during Lincoln's first term as president. Mary Lincoln staged several séances at the White House in the hope of communicating with the boy (Lincoln attended at least two of them), and years later, during the administration of Ulysses S. Grant, a member of the White House household staff claimed to have seen Willie and to have conversed with his spirit.

Lincoln Abroad

But it is Abe who is most frequently seen—and, because of his so distinctive hat and beard, the most frequently recognized. The fictional Sherlock Holmes notwithstanding, there can be few silhouettes so familiar to all as that of Abraham Lincoln, and perhaps that is why his spirit is so widely reported, not only in the White House but elsewhere, too.

Of course he haunts the site of the old Ford's Theater, where John Wilkes Booth shot him down as they awaited the opening act of the play *Our American Cousin* on April 14, 1865—although one does gaze askance upon the legend that he was seen on the premises on the night in 1893 when the building (now being utilized as a warehouse and offices) suffered a partial collapse, killing some two dozen people.

His spirit has been seen as far afield as Loudonville, New York, visiting a house owned by a woman who also happened to be at the theater on that fateful April night, and alongside his own grave in Springfield, Illinois. He is not, perhaps, as ubiquitous as George Washington, whose spirit has allegedly been sighted in almost as many roadside inns and taverns as he is said to have spent the night in. But still he gets about, and if not in person, then by proxy. For the most persistent sightings of the president are not of Lincoln himself, but of the railroad train that took him to his final resting place.

The train journey itself did take place. Lincoln was conveyed to his Springfield hometown aboard a specially commissioned locomotive, his un-embalmed body accompanied by two funeral workers whose tasks included ensuring that the corpse (and its growing odor) was forever surrounded by the freshest cut flowers, gathered at every stop the train made.

It was a lengthy journey. Having departed Washington, DC, on April 21, eight days later the train had traveled no farther than Columbus, Ohio, such

was the circuitous zigzagging of the route selected, and so great were the crowds of mourners waiting at every halt for one final glimpse of the slain president. In Columbus, where Lincoln's body was displayed in the statehouse rotunda for around twelve hours, over fifty thousand people came by to pay their respects. In Urbana, mourners constructed a massive archway from flowers at the North Main Street station. And so on.

For those people who witnessed the train passing by, it should have been a once-in-a-lifetime experience. However, the spirit world apparently had other ideas. Every year, it is said, on the anniversary of Lincoln's assassination, his phantom funeral train reenacts his last journey, departing Washington, DC, northward through New York State and then westward into Illinois. As it passes, all clocks and watches are said to stop for between five and eight minutes, before starting up again.

The procession consists of two trains. The first steam engine pulls a handful of cars, all draped in black and adorned with black streamers. From one, the strains of a spirit band can be heard and sometimes seen, black instruments playing a mournful dirge; and then, moments later, a second engine appears, this time drawing just one car, a flatbed truck upon which the president's coffin is laid.

Skeletons man the train, skeletons stand watch over the casket. The train's whistle is heard as she approaches, a mournful, eerie sound quite different from any locomotive whistle you have ever heard in your life; thick smoke billows from the engine's smokestack and sparks fly at her wheels.

But the entire tableau passes by as silent as the grave to which it is racing.

22

The Ghostly Gazetteer: Michigan to Mississippi

Katatonic Kreatures to Kurdle Your Kooties

A former sheriff's wife is said to still busy herself around the Old Jail Museum in **Allegan, Michigan**.

In **Irish Hills, Michigan**, the Prehistoric Forest theme park closed in 1999, and its fiberglass dinosaurs were left to decay. Except for those who roar and crash around through the night.

A keen cigar smoker named Mr. Hirst was the frock-coat-and-top-hat-clad former owner of the Holly Hotel in **Holly, Michigan**. So keen that you can still smell his smokes today.

The rotunda walkway at the State Capitol in **Lansing, Michigan**, is haunted by a painter who died on the job in 1878.

A lovelorn girl haunts **Holland, Michigan**'s Holland Castle, gazing from the tower window in search of her lost lover.

The gardens of the Perry Hotel in **Petoskey, Michigan**, are haunted by a woman who committed suicide there in 1902.

A lady in red walks the National House Inn, in **Marshall, Michigan**.

The Shakespearean actress Madame Helena Modjeska is a familiar ghostly

presence at the Calumet Theatre in **Calumet Township, Michigan**.

The spirit of a little girl has been seen and heard in the children's section of the library in **Belding, Michigan**.

Residents of the neighboring cemetery are sometimes seen waiting for late-night buses at the Greyhound station in **Hibbing, Minnesota**.

"Red" is the foul-tempered ghost who hurls insults and obscenities at late-night visitors to the Mounds Theatre in **Saint Paul, Minnesota**.

A long-dead doctor whose surgery is now a part of the Pipestone County Museum in **Pipestone, Minnesota**, seems still to be treating patients upstairs, beside the library.

A ghostly figure has been spied dancing on the top of the Chanhassen Water Tower in **Chaska, Minnesota**.

A **Moorhead, Minnesota**, woman killed when she attempted to leap aboard a train as it pulled out of the station, and whose body was then dragged for miles by the unsuspecting loco, walks the railroad tracks, her eyes glowing red.

The site of the old Milford Mine in **Crosby, Minnesota**, where an underground flood killed forty-one miners in February 1924, is haunted both by the drowned workers and the frustrated rescuers.

An actress who was struck and killed by a car while bicycling home from a performance is still in attendance at the Chanhassen Dinner Theatre in **Chanhassen, Minnesota**.

A suicide, a hanged man, still dangles from a wooden bridge in Quarry Hill Nature Center, in **Rochester, Minnesota**.

A drunken, sweat-soaked Confederate soldier is seen, but more frequently smelled, on the second floor of the Water Street Inn in **Stillwater, Minnesota**.

Dead Man's Pond is the foreboding name of a pool in Hamlet Park, in **Cottage Grove, Minnesota**. At least one passerby has drowned there, and apparently he or she yearns for company.

The last man to be hanged at City Hall in **Minneapolis, Minnesota**, was one John Moshik. He remains in situ, living out his last agonized moments as a botched noose left him to slowly strangle to death. Nearby, the old soap factory on Minneapolis's Second Street SE is haunted by the stray dogs and cats that were rounded up and strangled here, in order to be rendered into Victorian-era soap.

Fake or fact? A beautiful female ghost walks the street of an unnamed city.

katalinks/Shutterstock.com

Travelers attempting to overtake the little old lady in a checked sun bonnet who walks up the Old North Road in **Jackson, Mississippi**, will have a long wait—and a nasty surprise when they finally do. No matter how fast they drive, she will always remain just a few patient paces ahead of them, courting imminent destruction beneath speeding wheels. Swerve to overtake her, however, and she will reveal a ghastly, rotting visage, oozing blood around a malevolent glare.

A spectral farmer still drives the tractor that killed him around a field close by the China Grove Church in **Tylertown, Mississippi**.

The ghost of a three-legged woman walks Nash Road in **Columbus, Mississippi**. It is said that she came by her extra limb following the death of her lover. So that they might never be parted, she sewed one of his legs onto her own body.

South of **McComb, Mississippi**, the sound of breaking branches and screaming engines echoes throughout the swampland into which plummeted a plane carrying the rock band Lynyrd Skynyrd in 1977.

A phantom car, appearing and then disappearing without warning, is said to have caused countless near-accidents on Johns Bayou Road in **Vancleave, Mississippi**.

Bellevue, a house in **Pascagoula, Mississippi**, is haunted by the slaves who were cruelly tortured and murdered there by a particularly sadistic mistress.

Stucky's Bridge in **Enterprise, Mississippi**, is so named for the local innkeeper whose career in robbery and murder ended with his arrest and execution, hanged from that very same bridge.

A phantom harpist entertains guests at the Dunleith Historic Inn in **Natchez, Mississippi**.

A headless ghost walks the Grand Gulf Military State Park in **Port Gibson, Mississippi**.

A tragic spirit indeed is the bride, jilted at the altar of the New Palestine Baptist Church in **Picayune, Mississippi**, who rushed into the adjoining Palestine Graveyard and killed herself.

Spook's Hollow, on the old turnpike between Jackson and **Cape Girardeau, Mississippi**, is haunted by what an 1887 edition of the St. Louis *Globe-Democrat* described to be "a white and airy object which arose in its peculiar form so as to be plainly visible and then maneuvered in every imaginable manner, finally taking a zigzag wayward journey through the low dismal-looking surroundings, disappearing suddenly into the mysterious region from whence it came." The newspaper continued: "More than one incident of

dreadful experience has been related of this gloomy abode, and the place is looked upon by the midnight tourist and the lonesome citizen on his nocturnal travels as an unpleasant spot, isolated from the beautiful country which surrounds it."

The former site of the Crescent Hotel in **Pass Christian, Mississippi**, is the lingering abode of several Civil War–era spirits.

23

Do Robots Have Souls?

The Literal Ghosts in the Machines

It was shortly after New Year's in 1892 that railroad engineer J. M. Pinckney experienced a lifetime of levelheaded pragmatism unraveling before his startled eyes. It was a Sunday night, and he was traveling the Northern Pacific east-bound overland when he witnessed something that . . . well, as he told the *Seattle Times* shortly afterward, it made his hair stand on end.

It had been an uneventful journey so far, Pinckney and his workmate, another engineer, whiling away the time by terrifying the fireman with stories of past wrecks and disasters, and the manifold ways in which a horrible death can grasp even the most experienced hand. A ranking that the fireman, relatively fresh on the job, could only dream of attaining as the journey went on, and the stories grew grislier and grislier, until they finally settled upon one that had occurred not simply on this track, but in more or less this same locale. The story of engine number thirty-three, and the death, in collision many years before, of its engineer Tom Cypher.

It was a clear night, and as the locomotive approached Eagle Gorge, cutting through the Cascades, the men's attention did drift toward the tracks. The gorge was a well-known black spot, the scene of innumerable past accidents, it was said, including some of the most deadly on the entire track. Tom Cypher's death included. And suddenly it felt as though they were on the precipice of another, as the engineer suddenly grasped the throttle and threw the engine into reverse. The airbrakes shrieked, and in the carriages behind them passengers were jerked awake and thrown around like so many dolls.

The train came to a halt, and anxious voices demanded to know what had occurred. Hastily, the engineer threw reassurance back at them, some story of machinery coming loose, but everything was fine now and they would soon

be on their way. Only to his companions did he utter the truth—or, rather, his eyes showed it to them. Directly ahead of them on the track, less than three hundred yards away, another locomotive was bearing down upon them.

But the engineer had gathered his wits again and was pressing on regardless, and neither Mr. Pinckney nor the fireman ever forgot the words he now delivered. That who, or whatever, was driving engine thirty-three "can run it faster backward than I can this one forward. Have I seen it before? Yes, twenty times. Every engineer on the road knows that engine, and he's always watching for it when he gets to the gorge."

They followed, or pursued, the phantom for several miles. They noted the fact that its passage was silent, even though smoke puffed from the stack. They saw how its headlight threw out a near-rainbow's worth of bright colors. And then they saw it round a curve and that was it. It was gone. Until the next train came through the pass and found itself cheek to jowl with the ghost of engine thirty-three.

Always on Schedule

The spectral train that conveys the murdered President Lincoln through eternity, and that which haunts Eagle Canyon, should be proof enough that a ghost does not need to have been flesh and blood in order to become a haunting presence. All across America, and elsewhere around the world, similar legends attest to a veritable goods yard full of ghostly locomotives, all speeding hither and thither on missions that neither time nor obsolescence—nor even a thorough debunking—have been able to still.

Up in St. Louis, Saskatchewan, it is indeed true that a couple of local students were able to furnish incontrovertible proof that the fabled St. Louis Light, a ghost train that regularly ran to and from Prince Albert, was merely the diffracted lights of distant traffic. But other spirits steam and clatter no matter how hard cold science fights to deny them—and, in the process, they create fresh legends of their own.

In Iredell County, North Carolina, word is already spreading of the shadow seen standing on a certain railroad trestle, the spirit of a ghost hunter who died in 2010, hit by a real train while searching for the spectral engine that supposedly re-creates a nineteenth-century crash on the same spot every year.

Across the Rocky Mountains, abandoned railroads that once served the

mining towns are said still to echo with the roar of long-dead locos, even though the tracks have often been removed or allowed to decay away. Long abandoned tunnels still emit the clouds of choking smoke that once denoted the presence of a locomotive within, and wherever there have been crashes and wrecks, so there is inevitably a local legend to confirm that the agonies are played out to this day.

Shortly after Christmas 1876, close by the town of Ashtabula, Ohio, the bridge that carried the Lake Shore & Michigan Southern Railroad through to Erie, Pennsylvania, collapsed beneath the weight of the Pacific Express, and that despite having been inspected and declared safe just ten days earlier.

Every horror that could be visited upon a disaster, it seems, awaited the passengers of the Pacific Express. Officially, one hundred and twenty-eight souls were on board. Unofficially, given the chaos of a winter blizzard and the festive time of year, there were two hundred or more, first plunging from the shattered track into the icy river below, and then if the impact did not kill them, falling to whatever alternate death had been ordained for them—drowning in the water, freezing in the darkness, choking in the smoke or burning in the fire that now swept the crumpled carriages. Eighty-nine bodies were eventually found, but others were certainly lost, either to the waters or to the all-consuming flames.

Other deaths followed—a number of the disaster's initial survivors later succumbed to their injuries, while the inspector who had so blithely declared the bridge was safe was so overcome by guilt that he eventually committed suicide. It is said by visitors to the Chestnut Grove Cemetery that he still stands weeping alongside his tomb, looking toward the common grave into which the various unidentified remains were laid, and begging their forgiveness.

It is said, too, that those other victims also walk the same cemetery, although that is not their sole haunt. For once a year, on the night of December 29, they also seem to gather on the banks of Ashtabula Creek, there to re-create one of the most nightmarish scenes any mind—living or dead—could imagine.

Another bitter winter, another deadly bridge. In February 1887, while crossing the West Hartford Bridge in Vermont, the rear sleeper car of the Central Vermont Railroad's Montreal Express snagged a broken rail. It leaped from the track and plunged forty-two feet onto the thick ice that

coated the White River below. Three other coaches followed, igniting as the cast iron stoves that heated them met the whale oil lamps that lit them; flames exploded the length of the stricken carriages; death tore through the wreckage.

Thirty-seven people died, fifty more were injured. The flames destroyed not only the train, but also the wooden bridge that it had fallen from; and, though it was rebuilt, its very fabric remains tormented by the disaster it witnessed. The smell of burning is never far from the bridge, and though only one ghost has been reported, he is an instantly recognizable one—a young boy, clad in old-fashioned clothes, white socks and knickers, floating four feet above the level of the river. In roughly the same position as he'd be standing were the river frozen to the depth it was that night in 1887.

But he is not one of the dead. Rather, he was one of the lucky ones, who escaped all but unscathed from the wreckage and was then forced to watch as his fellow passengers, trapped within, died in the inferno that followed. His own father was among their number.

Grisly souvenirs of the railroads' terrible past abound. There is that burial ground in Denison, Texas, haunted by the limbs that railroad workers lost in sundry accidents. There are the multitude of spirits that haunt the Cascade Tunnel, beneath Stevens Pass in Washington State, where at least ninety-six railroad passengers were killed by the most lethal avalanche in American history.

In New York City's Grand Central Station, a baggage room that was employed as a makeshift morgue following the rail disaster at Spuyten Duyvil in 1882 was known to be haunted by some of their spirits, including one that delighted in playing tricks upon the baggagemen—those employees charged with fetching trunks and suitcases that had been placed in storage. Selecting the heaviest trunks in sight, it would cause them to weigh next to nothing, so that when the baggagemen picked it up, expecting to encounter major strain, they would instead topple over . . . or worse. At which point the ghost would reveal itself, sitting on the trunk in its grave clothes and laughing fit to bust.

Locomotive ghosts have appeared in song, as the duo of Kevin Godley and Lol Creme scored a European hit in the early 1980s with "Under Your Thumb," the story of a train suicide being constantly replayed across the years.

There is even a restored passenger car in Cleveland, in which no fewer than twenty-six people were scalded to death by live steam in August 1943 in an accident known as the Wreck of the Lackawanna Limited. Seventeen of the twenty-six are said still to haunt what is now known (understandably, of course) as the Death Car.

And where there are trains (and, as we saw in an earlier chapter, ships), there are other vehicles, too.

The Flying Phantoms of the English Peaks

One of the best attested of all America's mechanical ghost stories, strangely enough, hails not from the United States, but from the United Kingdom. The Peak District—the high moors that stretch between Sheffield and Manchester—are the scene of dozens of sightings of phantom aeroplanes, generally vast and silent vintage bombers, World War II–era monsters whose appearance is so abrupt, and whose disappearance so sudden, that many witnesses actually report them to the police, fearing they have just witnessed a crash. And so they have. It's just one that took place over seventy years ago.

On July 24, 1945, a US Air Force C-47 Dakota was lost in the Peak District, crashing into the hillside above Shelf Moor near Glossop, with the loss of all six US aircrew and an RAF passenger who was traveling on the plane.

The Dakota was on a routine supply trip from Leicester to Scotland at the time, and had been warned of deteriorating weather over the moors. But Captain George Johnson chose to ignore suggestions that he follow an alternate route, and so his plane has been reliving his mistake ever since then.

But was it a mistake? Or, as some superstitious folk have suggested, a curse of some kind, or even the operation of a "Bermuda Triangle"–style anomaly, which, like the powers that once seemed to operate in that corner of the Atlantic Ocean, delighted in "disappearing" aircraft?

Two months before the Dakota went down, six more airmen were lost when a Royal Canadian Air Force Lancaster bomber from 408 Squadron met its end on the same mountain; and three years later, in 1948, a US Air Force B-29 Superfortress lost its way in low clouds and exploded into the same peak while on a flight from RAF Scampton to Warrington in Cheshire. All thirteen crew died in the crash.

The difference is, the Bermuda Triangle's victims are never seen or heard of again, in this world or any other. The Peak District's prey, on the other hand, has been flying ever since. All three aircraft—the Dakota, the Lancaster and the Superfortress—have been identified by hikers and locals, all of whom are startled by the sudden proximity of a vintage aircraft, while their dead crew, too, have been sighted.

Around 1973, a quarter of a century after the loss of the B-29, local historian Gerald Scarratt was visiting the crash site after a particularly heavy rainstorm and, scratching in the soil, he retrieved what he believed to be a washer. On closer inspection, he realized it was a gold ring engraved with the name of the doomed plane's captain, Langdon P. Tanner.

Shortly after, showing that same spot to a group of aviation enthusiasts who had recently contacted him, he was astonished to see the whole lot of them run away. He caught up with them, and was astonished that all were ashen-faced and trembling. And that all of them had seen, standing directly behind their tour guide, a tall figure dressed in full flying gear.

Pioneering Spirits

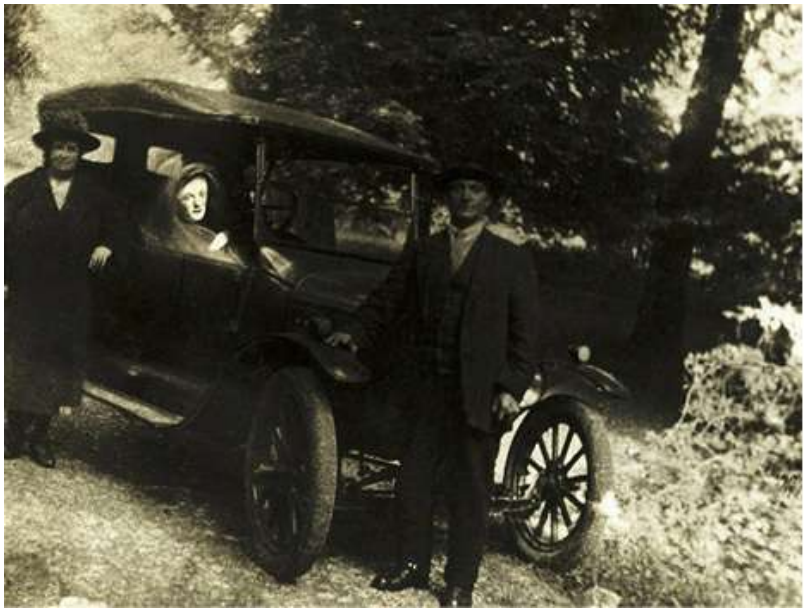
From the marvels of modern aviation to the deprivations of pioneer days.

In 1847, anybody abroad in what was then the village of Richmond, Texas, was treated to the unforgettable sight of an old prairie schooner—a covered wagon, drawn by a pair of oxen—in full flight down Main Street around midnight every night for a week.

Legend insisted that the wagon had once carried a family of pioneers who had been heading west out of Louisiana. Illness had stricken them as they journeyed, but no matter where they went for help, they were turned away; refused permission even to purchase medicine, rest their oxen or bury their dead. And so the wagon rumbled on until it was out of sight . . . and then, a few weeks later, it returned, two weary, half-dead oxen now dragging a load of dead and decaying corpses.

It was this return journey, the old-timers said, that the apparition was reenacting, but that was not to be the worst of it. Seven nights in succession, the ghost trundled down Main Street and, mere weeks later, an outbreak of yellow fever swept through the town. Clearly, it was no simple phantom. It was a portent of a doom that, given the townspeople's original inhospitality,

might well be considered well deserved.



Another of William Hope's magnificent creations, in which a spirit waits in the car while its earthly drivers pose for a snapshot.

Photo by William Hope/National Media Museum/Wikimedia Commons

In 1892, the apparition returned. Once again, two ghostly oxen pulled their load, and, once again, a driver sat back in the vehicle, darkened by shadow and wordless even when hailed by the passersby who called out in shock and amazement.

Only the sound of his whip cracking above the oxen and the creaking of the wagon itself could be heard, and so sedentary and gentle was the scene that, once they had overcome their initial surprise, many people attempted to halt, or at least slow, the apparition by grabbing at the oxen or the wagon itself. In every instance, their hands were left grasping thin air, but as attempts to "capture" the ghost grew bolder, so the spirits appeared to lose patience.

An ambush was laid. According to the *St. Louis Dispatch*, "each man carried a weapon, and across the street was stretched ropes, and even a roll of barbed wire attached to stout posts, not to be uprooted by any gentle means."

The coach appeared, and "Officers Gray and Connelly stepped out into the street and directly in front of the oxen and called upon the phantom driver to halt. The next moment the men were seen to stagger back and stretch their length upon the ground while the wagon seemed to pass directly over their bodies."

Pulled to safety once the wagon had passed, both men were found to be unconscious but unhurt. Neither forgot his experience, however. “I won’t describe what I saw, for I can’t,” said Mr. Gray. “And besides, I don’t want my mind to dwell on it. But I’ll tell you how I felt, and that was as if I’d stumbled on an iceberg in the dark, only the air about that ghost’s team was colder than any ice I ever saw.”

His companion, Officer Connelly, was less squeamish. As he fell back, he told the astonished journalist, he caught a glimpse of several . . . many . . . dead faces lying in the back of the wagon; and saw, too, that the driver was a skeleton with blazing, fiery eyes.

What better conveyance could there be for a family of corpses?

Celebrity Scares

Horror author Stephen King did not invent the haunted car. But his 1983 novel *Christine* certainly established the ground rules by which a 1958 Plymouth Fury should behave, should it be so minded; just as his short story “Throttle” (like Richard Matheson’s “Duel”) gave metallic flesh and blood to the notion of a demonically possessed truck.

Both tales are chilling. Although not, perhaps, so chilling as a pair of real-life incidents that thrill not only because of their spectral content, but also because of the celebrity of the cars’ most famous victims.

An earlier chapter looked at sightings of celebrity ghosts, but of course it is not their physical forms alone that live on. Winding down the Old Spanish Trail that is Route 90 in Louisiana, close by the Rigolets waterway, late-night motorists not only pass the spot where actress Jayne Mansfield was killed in a late-night car smash in June 1967, they also run the risk of witnessing it occurring again . . . and again . . . and again.

The air was thick with mosquito repellent that night, a choking white fog that wiped out all hope of visibility. When the tractor trailer rig ahead of Mansfield’s car slowed to a crawl as the invisibility loomed, she just kept on going. The impact, said the *St. Petersburg Times* the following day, “peeled back the top of the sedan and Miss Mansfield was decapitated.” Almost half a century on, if the conditions are right, you can again hear the awful shrieking impact as metal, rubber, glass and flesh collided with one another; other times, you might pass the wreckage, too, with the headless body of the

Hollywood starlet still sitting upright in the tangled wreckage.

Mansfield's car was pulverized; if it exists today, it is wholly as a ghost. The silver Porche Spyder (one of just ninety manufactured) in which James Dean perished, however, lives on—and, according to several legends, so does something else.

The fatal accident occurred on September 30, 1955. Actor Dean had long been an aspiring motor racer, much to the horror of his studio and, when work began on Dean's latest movie, *Giant*, Warner Brothers banned him from any further racing until the film was complete. When Dean entered an event scheduled for October 1 in Salinas, California, it would be his first competitive run since Santa Barbara on Memorial Day.

He would not make it. At 5:45 the previous evening, as he took the Spyder for a practice run on Route 466, a 1950 Ford Tudor coupe crossed over the center line while making a turn, smack into the Spyder. The two cars met head-on, the impact flipping Dean's car into the air, to come back down on its wheels in a gully. The actor's neck was broken, his body battered. At 6:20, he was declared dead on arrival at the Paso Robles War Memorial Hospital, twenty-eight miles from the accident scene.

The so-called Curse of the Car came into play immediately. A car customizer named George Barris purchased the wreck for $2,500, and it had not even reached its new home in Barris's workshop when it slipped and fell onto one of the mechanics, breaking both his legs.

The car was cut up and used for parts—spreading the misery, as it were. A doctor, Troy McHenry, purchased the engine and had it installed in his own racing car. On October 24, 1956, he was killed when the vehicle suffered a catastrophic engine failure and crashed into a tree during a race at the Pomona Fair Ground. During the same race, another driver, William Eschrid, was seriously injured when his car flipped over. He had purchased, and installed, James Dean's driveshaft.

Two of the Spyder's tires, reconditioned and sold to a single passenger, burst simultaneously and caused another accident.

The wreck was loaned to the California Highway Patrol to be used in a touring display illustrating the importance of automobile safety. Days later, the Spyder was the only vehicle to survive a fire that destroyed the garage where the exhibits were being stored.

On display in Sacramento, the car slipped from its display stand and landed

on an onlooker, breaking the teenager's hip. A mechanic died when, while transporting the vehicle on a flatbed truck, he was thrown from his cab during an accident and crushed by the toppling Spyder.

And then . . . it disappeared. In 1960, the Porsche was loaned out for a safety exhibit in Miami, Florida. When the exhibit was over, and the wreckage was en route back to Los Angeles on a truck, it simply vanished. It has never been seen or heard from since. Or has it? On still fall evenings, it is said, the sound of screaming brakes and the stench of burning rubber can still be heard around the intersection of Routes 466 and 41. . . .

The Thirsty Dead

The transportation of the dead, as the tale of Abraham Lincoln's death train reminds us, has long been a source of spectral activity and human anxiety. Several cemeteries, and other sites besides, have traditions revolving around ghostly hearses, with the proud, horse-pulled carriages of the pre-automotive age an especial favorite.

Echoing Abe, a particular stretch of railroad track to the south of London still rattles to the wheels of the London Necropolis Railway, a familiar sight for over eighty years, from 1854, as it transported the city's recent dead to the Brookwood cemetery, twenty-three miles away.

And nights on New York City's East River are occasionally punctuated by the mournful siren and gentle throb of the *Fidelity*, the so-called dead boat that once plied those waters between the hospitals on Randalls Island and Wards Island, the lunatic asylum at Blackwell's Island, and the Harlem Hospital, either collecting their daily dead for the city morgue, or then heading out to Hart's Island where the mortuary's unclaimed visitors would finally be laid to rest in the City Cemetery—whose own startling story we read earlier in this book. How fitting that the little boat that conjoined these awful places should itself still be traveling the waterways.

The majority of ghostly machine tales follow the same direction as those above, either remembering or precipitating tragedy. Every American city seems to possess at least one elevator, for example, that is believed to relive some past horror—such as the one at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, where a passing student fascination with elevator surfing . . . leaping onto the *roof* of the elevator from the floor above . . . ended when one

of their number was crushed to death against the top of the shaft. Ever since then, riders on the twenty-second floor have had to suffer the sounds of his fatal flattening.

There is one machine, however, that simply operates completely benignly; that is neither scary nor even particularly spooky. It might even have a perfectly reasonable explanation, although nobody seems to know what it is.

The big red Coke machine on the corner of Seattle's Broadway and John has been there for at least the last decade and a half, and it looks it. Its buttons are sun-bleached, its logos are outmoded. And *nobody*, it is said, has *ever* seen anyone either restock the machine or collect the money from it.

The machine just sits there, forever filled with an array of sodas (charged at modern prices, sadly) that not only include all the old favorites, but also what journalist Hilary Pollack, investigating the machine for Vice.com in March 2014, describes as "a whimsical, circusy-looking, fear-of-clowns-conjuring *Mystery* button that results in a random selection.

"And that doesn't mean a random selection from the other drink choices; it means beverages so random that you couldn't even think of them if you were playing Scattegories. Upon recently bestowing the machine with three dollars, I received a Mountain Dew White Out, a raspberry-flavored Nestea Brisk, a Hawaiian Punch and a Grape Fanta. It has also been rumored to birth Vanilla Cokes, Black Cherry Frescas and Sunkist Cherry Limeade. . . .

"Where can you even get Brisk iced tea in a can anymore?"

Seems like even ghosts get thirsty.

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The Ghostly Gazetteer: Nebraska to Nevada

Leering Landlords and Loathsome Lividities

A woman in white has walked the Prospect Hill Cemetery in **Omaha, Nebraska**, since at least 1874, when she appeared, demanded to know where her children were, and then disappeared before anybody could even try to answer. Elsewhere in that same city, a spectral train travels the Keystone Trail, near Ninetieth and Fort Streets.

A rowdy argument from unseen patrons regularly shatters the evening silence of the library in **Broken Bow, Nebraska**.

A property dispute in **Spring Ranch, Nebraska**, ended with a pair of landowners, Tom Jones and his widowed sister Elizabeth, being hanged on the banks of the Little Blue River. The bridge that now stands at that same spot is, for obvious reasons, now known as “the Haunted Bridge.”

Three men buried alive while working in an underground cave in the early 1900s now haunt the course of the Platte Center Creek in **Platte Center, Nebraska**.

A witch named Lottie is said to haunt Taylor Cemetery in **Homer, Nebraska**, still guarding her grave against any tomb robbers who might still be seeking the riches with which she was supposedly buried.

Not all of the bodies were moved when an old cemetery in **Fremont,**

Nebraska, was transformed into Barnard Park. Some were inadvertently left behind, much to their owners' apparent fury.

A little girl died after somebody put poison on the reed of her clarinet before a school concert in **Valentine, Nebraska**, in 1944. The school is now the Centennial Hall museum, but she is still in attendance.

Progress long ago swept away the bridge that crossed Logan Creek in **Pender, Nebraska**, from which a murderer was hanged by local vigilantes. But the ghost of the bridge can still sometimes be seen.

More than a century has passed since a prostitute named Rosie committed suicide in Room Eleven of the Silver Queen Hotel in **Virginia City, Nevada**. But she still calls it home. And ghostly gurneys continue to roll down the corridors of what used to be the St. Mary Louise Hospital.

The fraudulent spirit photographer William Hope claimed that his pictures did, indeed, provide hope.
Photo by William Hope/National Media Museum/Wikimedia Commons

Another former prostitute, known as the Lady in Red, touches men's hair and

brushes against them at the Mizpah Hotel in **Tonopah, Nevada**.

Comedian Redd Foxx is said still to dwell in his former home on South Eastern Avenue, in **Paradise, Nevada**.

Workers injured during construction of the Hoover Dam were often taken to the nearby hospital in **Old Boulder City, Nevada**—and some, those who died from their injuries, have never left.

The ninth floor of the Riviera casino on the **Las Vegas** Strip is said to be haunted by a any number of historical mob victims.

The Carson City Mint in **Carson City, Nevada**, struck US coinage from the silver pulled from the nearby mines. Mint superintendent Abraham Curry, who passed away in 1873, is still supervising operations today.

Not many places are haunted by the celebrities who simply passed through on vacation. But the Cal Neva Lodge and Casino in **Crystal Bay, Nevada**, apparently boasts two such spirits. Both Frank Sinatra and Marilyn Monroe have been witnessed enjoying the attractions.

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Time, Gentlemen, Please!

Or, I'll Have Some of What He's Drinking

One Autumn night, in Sudbury town,
Across the meadows bare and brown,
The windows of the wayside inn
Gleamed red with fire-light through the leaves
Of woodbine, hanging from the eaves
Their crimson curtains rent and thin.
As ancient is this hostelry
As any in the land may be,
Built in the old Colonial day,
When men lived in a grander way,
With ampler hospitality;
A kind of old Hobgoblin Hall,
Now somewhat fallen to decay,
With weather-stains upon the wall,
And stairways worn, and crazy doors,
And creaking and uneven floors,
And chimneys huge, and tiled and tall.
A region of repose it seems,
A place of slumber and of dreams,
Remote among the wooded hills! . . .
Round this old-fashioned, quaint abode
Deep silence reigned, save when a gust
Went rushing down the county road,
And skeletons of leaves, and dust,
A moment quickened by its breath,

Shuddered and danced their dance of death,
And through the ancient oaks o'erhead
Mysterious voices moaned and fled.

—Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's "Tales of a Wayside Inn"

There has never been any shortage of haunted taverns in America. From the earliest colonial times, it seems as though a passing entrepreneur needed only mention that he was opening a bar than there was a ghost lined up to haunt it —a customer perishing in an opening night brawl; a gambler dying for the sake of a few cents; a cheated lover pursuing his rival to a drinking spot; and, of course, the vast array of western souls, goodies and baddies both, who moseyed on down to the saloon bar and never came out again. Not upright, anyway.

Every tavern and bar that is old enough to have a history will also have a ghost. In Telford, Pennsylvania, the Rising Sun Inn is visited by the magnificently named Scary Mary. And, if we listen to the words of the poet, Longfellow visited the Red Horse Tavern in Sudbury, Massachusetts, in 1862, while still recuperating from the grievous injuries he suffered in the fire that took the life of his wife, Fanny, the previous July.

His words suggest that the tavern was in scarcely any better shape than he was. "A rambling, tumble-down building . . . with weather-stains upon the wall / And stairways worn, and crazy doors / And creaking and uneven floors / And chimneys huge, and tiled and tall."

The building was originally constructed in the early 1700s by one David Howe for his pregnant wife, the absolutely splendidly named Hepzibah Death. Initially a private dwelling, by 1716, the house's position along Boston's well-traveled Old Post Road suggested that it open its doors to the public and the Howe Inn became a popular watering hole for many a thirsty wayfarer.

The inn remained in the Howe family until 1861, when the final scion, Lyman Howe, passed away childless. It became the Red Lion Inn for a time, and later was renamed Longfellow's Wayside Inn. Since that time, it has survived both modern additions and destruction (including a devastating fire), to become the oldest inn still to be in operation in the United States today.

Tales that the Wayside Inn is haunted date back at least to the 1860s, when one of the hostesses made a note of a report she received, of a ghost seen

half-floating, half-running through the Old Hall—a room frequently given over to dancing parties and group meetings. (It is now known as the Hobgoblin Room.)

Another spirit that presumably dates from around the same time is that of Jerusha Howe, the sister of the final landlord of the Howe family line, Lyman. Known far and wide as "the belle of Sudbury," Ms. Howe was something of a society icon. No less an authority than *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* credited her with the possession of "great common-sense, combined with refined tastes, musical accomplishments and rare domestic abilities. She was delicate in person, not of robust constitution, which kept her much at home under the care of watchful parents."

She was an accomplished singer and the first person in town to own a spinet piano. But she also passed away unwed, and it is this that lies at the root of her ghost story—the tale that she fell in love with one particular guest at the inn, an Englishman who swore he would return for her, but who never did. She was still waiting when she died in 1842, some say of a broken heart.

Her ghost is certainly coquettish. Male guests spending the night in Room Nine, Miss Jerusha's own former bedroom, have reported being visited by soft breath on their faces and gentle caresses that linger just long enough for the sleeper to awaken and see her face close to their own. Her favorite citrus perfume is constantly in the air, and the sound of her playing the Copenhagen Waltz on her beloved spinet is no stranger to the inn staff, either.

In fact, the only downside to the entire tale is that the aforementioned fire destroyed so much of the building as Miss Jerusha would have known it that she might as well be haunting a wholly new construct. Which may be why most seasoned ghost hunters claim they never even heard of her spirit until the early 1990s.

That is often the problem with ghosts, particularly those that adhere to places—inns, hotels, museums—that could be said to materially benefit from having a resident spook. No matter how cynical a would-be guest might be, given the choice between staying in a haunted hotel or an unhaunted one, most adventurous souls would choose the former. Even if the rooms are a couple of bucks more expensive—which itself is a concept that surely raises a wry smile if one considers the accountants and bookkeepers, scarcely renowned among the world's most imaginative professionals, predicating their financial projections upon the public's belief in ghosts.

That the field of hauntings is wide open to abuse and trickery is a subject that merits a book in itself, although there is perhaps no greater examination of the tourist-baiting end of things than the 1988 movie *High Spirits*—the immortal Peter O'Toole as the down-at-heel owner of his family's Irish castle home, Castle Plunkett, fending off foreclosure by declaring the old pile to be haunted, and then recruiting his own staff, and a battery of extremely poor special effects, to convince his guests that it is.

Ranked alongside the full weight of O'Toole's entire acting career, *High Spirits* is seldom selected as a true highlight of his art, although O'Toole's performance itself is as stellar as it ought to be, and a supporting cast that includes Daryl Hannah, Liz Smith and Steve Guttenberg, plus a script and direction by Neil Jordan, all guarantee that it's a far better movie than the reviewers let on at the time.

Plus, to return to our own primary interest in the subject, it's a timely reminder that just because the advertising and the Internet insist that your next vacation destination is haunted, that doesn't mean it is.

Neither, however, does it mean that it isn't.

The Inn for the Infamous

Named for George Talbott, landlord of the establishment during the 1880s, the Talbott Tavern in Bardstown, Kentucky, is one of those places whose guest book alone reads like a work of fiction. In alphabetical order, but by no means exhaustively, John James Audubon, Henry Clay, Stephen Foster and Washington Irving rank among the men of letters to have visited.

Military heroes General George S. Patton and George Rogers Clark, and three former presidents, Andrew Jackson, William Henry Harrison and Abraham Lincoln, are among the other VIPs to have stayed there, and when the exiled king of France, Louis Philippe, Duke of Orleans found himself (plus entourage, naturally) in Bardstown on October 17, 1797, as he made his way to Nashville, tradition insists he is the artist who decorated the old stone walls (two feet thick in some places) with a series of murals depicting a French garden. The inn at that time, incidentally, was known as the Hynes Hotel; later, it became the Newman House.

As for who haunts the Talbott Inn, this is one of those instances where the expected legend is turned on its head. For it is not the ghost that is famous, so

much as the first person to report seeing it!

Jesse James, the notorious nineteenth-century outlaw, was another of the Talbott's guests—in fact, he was something of a regular, with several relatives in the area, including a cousin who actually worked in the building next door to the tavern . . . as a jailer in the Old Jail! Wry tradition insists that many was the evening that one of the most wanted men in the state whiled away the hours drinking and laughing in the town lockup, before retiring to a comfortable bed in the inn next door.

And so it was that one night, as James relaxed in his suite at the inn, he was suddenly startled by what he took to be an intruder. No human, however, had set foot in the room that evening, as was evident when the innkeeper, rushing in to find out what the commotion was, saw the bullet holes that pocked the French king's murals, and that Jesse James had fired off at the figure that stood at the end of his bed.

An unnamed and unknown presence still haunts that room, while Jesse James himself has been seen on the premises, doubtless still hunting for the varmint that spoiled his evening's rest. A cold spot in the General's Quarters room, where the inn's military guests are said to have stayed, perhaps lingers in the visitor's memory; while the Talbott family itself is very active. Mrs. Talbott, though dead for over a century, still busies herself on the premises, while the inn also remembers what is surely its greatest tragedy—the fact that six of the Talbotts' children died within those walls, all within the space of three years. Whether running, playing, or simply laughing unseen, they remain there to this day.

J. R. Pepper: “Even after ‘spirit photography’ had been found to be fraudulent, people still desperately clung onto the idea that these were real. I loved the Barnum-esque farce as well the theatricality of the pictures and decided I wanted to try at creating them myself.”

© *J. R. Pepper*

Here Comes Paul Revere!

Inns were not, of course, solely intended (or, at least, utilized) as places of pleasure and relaxation. Alongside the church, inns represented the center of many communities—the most obvious meeting place, the most common gathering place and, in times of emergency, a lot more besides.

In Concord, Massachusetts, the Colonial Inn is dated—as its name suggests—to the very foundation of the United States; it was Concord to whence Paul Revere was headed on his famous midnight ride and the inn, no doubt, where he would have spent the night had he actually made it there.

Instead he was captured just outside Lexington, on what is now Battle Road, and so he was never able to deliver his intended warning, that the redcoats were themselves marching upon Concord, to avail themselves of the local militia’s arsenal, stored in a building next door to (and subsequently absorbed into) the inn, the office and residence of Dr. Timothy Minot.

The locals knew something was afoot, though. The British made it past one minutemen ambush, at Lexington Common. A second, on Concord's North Bridge, proved more resilient, however, and the British were soon in retreat—pursued by minutemen and jeering colonists alike. The American Revolution was underway, although back in Concord, more attention was being paid to the local men injured in the battle for the bridge.

Dr. Minot established a makeshift hospital in one part of his home, and a temporary morgue in another. And today, with Room Twenty-Four of the Colonial Inn occupying that same space, a wounded solider in Colonial-era uniform seems still to be awaiting treatment there. Treatment from the dark shadow that moves across the room, halting at the foot of the bed, watching from the shadows . . . Dr. Minot himself, still busying himself with the wounded from that so historic conflict.

Time passes. Inns, taverns and bars, so much a center of local life in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, have long since been overtaken by other centers of entertainment—ballrooms, speakeasies, dances, diners, ghastly themed reproductions of what a "typical," "olde-time" "tavern" most certainly did not look like.

But the spirit of the spirits that are associated with them has not especially changed, even if more recent times have given the ghosts greater range in which to haunt.

Resurrection Mary

One of the best-known hauntings in the history of Chicago nightlife is centered upon the old Oh Henry Ballroom, on Archer Avenue. There, the so-called Resurrection Mary, a gorgeous blonde, from all accounts, allows herself to be gently courted, sometimes even danced with.

Yes, her would-be suitors might say on reflection, maybe her flesh did feel a little colder than they'd have expected. And maybe she did appear a little more withdrawn or distracted than the occasion seemed to deserve. But she would always accept their offer of a ride home, and her directions always took the car past the gates of Resurrection cemetery . . . which is where she would promptly vanish.

According to some sources, Mary has been playing these tricks since as far back as 1939, and researchers suggest that she might even have been around

before that—Chicago ghostlore seems convinced that she is the ghost of twenty-one-year-old Mary Bregovy, killed in a car accident as she and a date drove home from the Oh Henry in 1934.

At first, reports of her activity were confined to a young woman hitchhiking on Archer Avenue and, if she was not eventually offered a lift, leaping aboard the running boards of passing cars. Whether or not she was riding legitimately, however, her journey always ended at the same place, the Resurrection gates.

As time passed, so did Mary's range. Several times in the seventies, apparitions matching Mary's description were reported at clubs far from Archer Avenue. Other times, she was seen dancing at the cemetery gates, or standing on the other side of them, staring out at passing cars.

That Mary's tale started out as just one more local variant upon what is one of the most widespread urban legends of them all—the tale of the vanishing hitchhiker—is without question. All of the standard elements are there: the young, lovely, girl. The vague directions to her intended destination. And her sudden disappearance at a certain point on the journey. Sometimes a cemetery, sometimes a crash site, sometimes a ruined cottage or a long-dilapidated building.

Occasionally, a second character will be introduced, a grieving relative who answers the door when the baffled driver stops at the hiker's address to explain that the girl died a year ago this very night, or words to that effect.

The ghost of Resurrection Mary, however, was never content with such a familiar trope. A high-spirited girl in life, she remains a high-spirited spirit in death, dancing away eternity in the company of a succession of unsuspecting young men and never needing to worry how she will get home at the end of the evening.

Neither is she alone. Elsewhere in the Windy City, the short journey between the Melody Mill Ballroom on Des Plaines Avenue, and the Waldheim Cemetery on Harlem Avenue is walked, and sometimes hitchhiked, by another lost beauty, a girl known to the locals as the Forest Park Flapper. In fact, in every town, in every city and perhaps in every country, a similar tale is told about a certain stretch of road, a certain time of night, and a lovely young lady with a certain look in her eye.

And, if you're really lucky, maybe she'll direct that look toward you.

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The Ghostly Gazetteer: New Hampshire to New Jersey

Man-Eating Monsters and Moaning Mysteries

A family by the name of Blood, murdered in **Hollis, New Hampshire**, in the nineteenth century, understandably haunt the Pine Hill Cemetery.

The Sumner Knight Chapel in **Keene, New Hampshire**, has a very unusual ghost. It is the unmistakable taste of soap, which communicates itself to anyone who uses bad language in the vicinity of the chapel.

The never-completed frame of Madame Sherri's Castle has long been a popular haunt in the woods around **Chesterfield, New Hampshire**, and of course it is haunted—by Madame Antoinette Sherri herself, a costume designer who ran out of money before she completed her dream home.

Nine Independence Day revelers were killed when an explosion rocked Fort Constitution in **New Castle, New Hampshire**, on July 4, 1809. Their spirits are still in the mood to party, though. Nearby, oily footprints and disembodied voices are the most common phenomena around the Portsmouth Harbor lighthouse.

A witch named Goody Cole haunts Island Path Road in **Hampton, New Hampshire**, repaying the locals for the indignity of digging up her body following her (surprisingly for the era, natural) death and driving a stake through her heart.

Mary Ritter was buried alive by her husband in 1808. Reason enough for her to reappear as the Blue Lady, resident ghost of the Vale End Cemetery in **Wilton, New Hampshire**.

Spectral children play in the halls of the Grenville Hotel in **Bay Head, New Jersey**.

The last moments of a Revolutionary War–era messenger's drowning horse can be heard, it is said, at Nellie's Pond, in **Delanco, New Jersey**.

The junction of Gallows Hill Road and Brookside Place in **Cranford, New Jersey**, marks the site of the old hanging tree, from which Revolutionary War spies were routinely strung. The tree is long gone, but its grisly fruit remains.

There is an accursed chair at the Old Canal Inn in **Nutley, New Jersey**, the cause of a ferocious argument between two septuagenarians, both of whom wanted to sit in it—and both of whom died within ten days of doing so.

Elizabeth is the name of the little girl ghost who calls out the names of the waitstaff at the Washington Inn in **Cape May, New Jersey**.

The Van Wickle House in **Franklin Township, New Jersey**, is haunted by Evert and Cornelia Van Wickle, newlyweds who tragically died on the day they were due to move in. So they moved in anyway.

Shades of Death Road, near **Hope, Warren County, New Jersey**, was named either for the victims of a virulent outbreak of malaria, or for an especially vicious wildcat attack. It may not be haunted, per se, but the name resonates regardless.

The Clove Road Apartments, on the campus of Montclair State University in **Montclair, New Jersey**, are allegedly bedeviled by spiritual remnants of that old haunting favorite, an Indian burial ground.

A ghost with no legs decidedly does *not* walk the few yards between entranceway and yard at the Burlington County Prison in **Mount Holly, New Jersey**. But it does shuffle.

A ghostly World War II–era PT boat has apparently been seen at the old Elco Naval Division boat-building factory in **Bayonne, New Jersey**.

A small black dog seen on Wood Street in **Burlington, New Jersey**, is one half of the spectral security team that the pirate Blackbeard established to guard the treasure he buried beneath a black walnut tree in 1717. The other half, oddly silent in the spectral register, was a fellow pirate who, whether naively or otherwise, volunteered to stay behind to guard the treasure after Blackbeard had left. His satanically maned master thanked him for the offer, then shot him dead, burying the corpse standing up alongside dead dog and treasure.

No tour of Haunted New Jersey is complete without a visit to the eerie remains of the Gingerbread Castle in Hamburg.

Photo by Dave Thompson

On April 16, 1854, some 250 to 300 German immigrants perished when their ship, the *Powhatan*, sank in a storm off the New Jersey coast. Bodies were discovered on the beach as far south as Atlantic City; others came ashore at Peahala on Long Beach Island. But many of their spirits are said to crowd

what is called Graveyard Inlet, in the shadow of the (subsequently constructed) Absecon Lighthouse at **Atlantic City, New Jersey**. The *Powhatan*'s tragic cargo also haunted the Mansion of Health, a grand hotel on Long Beach Island, whose owner was also the local wreck master. He was responsible for caring for both bodies and salvage as it washed up, and it was some months before it was discovered (although it had long been suspected) that he had looted the bodies as he came across them. He fled, but his hotel retained a retinue of eerie guests, heard sobbing in the night. The well-attested figure of a spectral woman and child was also seen there, before the hotel burned down in 1874.

At **Lakehurst, New Jersey**, the site of the *Hindenburg* zeppelin disaster is haunted both by the screams of the onlookers and by the fiery crash itself.

Revolutionary War soldiers still gather at the Union County Courthouse in **Elizabeth, New Jersey**.

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Most Desirable Residence for Sale

Or, There’s a Ghost in My House

Even if it wasn’t haunted, and there had never been any suggestion that it might be, the Whaley House would rank among the most historically important buildings in San Diego.

It sits on San Diego Avenue, a Greek Revival–style residence that was built in 1857 to house merchant Thomas Whaley’s general store. Since that time, it has served, also, as a county courthouse (San Diego’s second), a commercial theater (the city’s first), a granary, a billiard hall, a school, a polling station and a ballroom. Today, hardly surprisingly, it is a museum.

According to local historian June A. Strudwick, writing in the *Journal of San Diego History* in 1960, Whaley House has “witnessed more history than any other building in the city.” And, according to Zak Bagans, the so supremely levelheaded host of the Travel Channel’s *Ghost Adventures*, it is the most “iconic” haunted house in America—a term that he is hardly likely to bandy around at random.

How many ghosts does the Whaley House host? Nobody knows for sure. The majority of the Whaley family are certainly said to still walk their former home, led by daughter Violet, whose suicide in 1885 is one of the scenes from the house’s past that visitors have allegedly seen being reenacted.

The oldest documented ghost at the Whaley House, however, is “Yankee Jim.” James (aka Santiago) Robinson, a miscreant who was convicted of attempted grand larceny in San Diego in 1852 and was sentenced to death as a consequence. He was hanged in what, according to the local newspaper, was an especially barbarous fashion—placed, with the rope around his neck, on the back of a wagon. But he was not a particularly obliging man. Apparently, he “kept his feet in the wagon as long as possible . . .” until the

watching officials finally pulled him away. At which point, “he swung back and forth like a pendulum until he strangled to death.”

Two points about the execution that are of interest. First, Thomas Whaley was one of the onlookers that dismal day. And secondly, he was clearly so enamored of the patch of land upon which the hanging took place that he quickly made arrangements to purchase it. The Whaley House was built upon the site of the town gallows—a position which, one cannot help but suspect, is second only to a Native American burial ground in terms of places where you really don’t want to be building things. Not if you intend them to remain peaceful, anyway.

The *San Diego Union* reported Thomas Whaley’s own feelings on the subject. A no-nonsense New Yorker who first arrived in San Diego in 1851, two years after the gold rush drew him to California, he does not appear to be the kind of person who would easily take fright at a few odd noises.

Whaley House in San Diego. By day, just a lovely old house in the center of town . . .

Lowe Llaguno/Shutterstock.com

. . . but, by night, it even looks like it should be haunted. From the 2012 film *The Haunting of Whaley House*.

The Asylum/Photofest

But . . . “Soon after the couple and their children moved in, heavy footsteps were heard moving about the house. Whaley described them as sounding as though they were made by the boots of a large man. Finally he came to the conclusion that these unexplained footfalls were made by Yankee Jim Robinson.”

The family’s youngest daughter, Lillian, still lived in the house in the early 1950s, and the centennial of Yankee Jim’s execution. She never doubted that he walked the house, while the Whaley House’s own website, while refusing to be drawn on whether or not the place is *really* haunted, does quote an unnamed visitor to the museum in 1962, recalling how “the ghost had driven her family from their visit there more than sixty years [earlier], her mother was unnerved by the phantom walking noise and the strange way the windows unlatched and flew up.” If Yankee Jim’s ghost is the most threatening of the house’s supernatural occupants, the Whaley family are the most frequently sighted.

Thomas and Anna Whaley had six children. The first, Francis Hinton, was born in 1854; a second son, Thomas Jr. in 1856; their first daughter, Anna Amelia in 1858. But tragedy had already stricken the family; Thomas Jr. died from scarlet fever aged just eighteen months . . . Anna was already pregnant

with Anna Amelia at the time. Shortly after, a fire destroyed the store. In 1859, the family moved to San Francisco, where the remainder of their children were born. It would be 1868 before they returned to San Diego, but the old house was completely modernized and life went on.

Tragedy awaited their return. In October 1868, one of the upstairs bedrooms was converted into a theater after Thomas Whaley rented it to the Tanner Troupe, a theatrical troupe that was visiting San Diego at the time. From all accounts it was a successful operation. But it was a short-lived one. Just seventeen days into the troupe's residency, its founder and namesake, Thomas Tanner, passed away—some say on the stage itself. His troupe disbanded and the theater was closed.

Anna Amelia and her younger sister Violet were the first to fly the nest, both moving out to get married in 1882. Violet, however, would soon return. Just two weeks after her marriage, to a George T. Bertolacci, she awoke to find he had vanished—taking her substantial dowry with him. He was a conman, a trickster, a fraud, and Violet was distraught. She returned to the family home and attempted to rebuild her life. But society looked poorly upon abandoned women, and poorer still upon divorcées. On August 18, 1885, poor Violet committed suicide, shooting herself in the chest with her father's gun. For her suicide note, she left four lines from Thomas Hood's *Bridge of Sighs*:

> Mad from life's history,
> Swift to death's mystery;
> Glad to be hurled,
> Anywhere, anywhere, out of this world.

Yet the tragedy had still to play out completely. Aghast at the scandal that enveloped the mourning family, daughter Corinne Lillian's fiancé abruptly broke off their engagement, plunging the household into fresh gloom.

They could no longer bear to remain in the old house. A new home was built, a single-story frame home at 933 State Street, and the Whaley House was effectively abandoned. A certain reputation quickly followed. Mysterious figures seen in the grounds, or standing at the empty windows. Lights and sounds. Cries of despair. A single gunshot.

It would be 1909 before a Whaley returned to the house, when the eldest

son, Francis, chose to renovate the building and open it as a historic museum. His mother, Anna, his sister Corinne and his brother George all joined him in moving back into the home, and there they would die—Anna, aged eighty, in 1913, Frances in 1914, George in 1928 and finally Corinne in 1953. And with every passing, another spirit joined those who were already said to be walking the premises.

Selling the Spirits

One of the museum's own former curators, Jean Reading, reported seeing a visitor's daughter, five or six years old, happily waving in the direction of the parlor. When asked whom she was waving to, the girl described a man who was standing there, waving back. Ms. Reading believed it was probably Thomas, patriarch of the Whaley family, in his favorite frock coat and pantaloons.

His wife, Anna, remains by his side. No less a personage than television personality Regis Philbin is numbered among the visitors who saw "something" in the house. Visiting in 1964, "all of a sudden I noticed something on the wall. There was something filmy white, it looked like an apparition of some kind, I got so excited I couldn't restrain myself! I flipped on the [flash]light and nothing was there but a portrait of Anna Whaley, the long-dead mistress of the house."

The renowned psychic Sybil Leek, too, recorded a ghostly encounter. "It was a long-haired girl," Ms. Leek reported. "She was very quick, you know, in a longish dress. She went to the table in this room and I went to the chair."

One of the Whaley daughters, perhaps? Or a playmate of theirs, a girl named Annabel Washburn who, according to a most grotesque legend, died in the backyard of the Whaley House when she ran into a low-hanging clothesline and broke her neck. A grisly reminder of Yankee Jim's demise, and also of the trick that he apparently enjoys playing on male visitors to the house. Approaching them on the stairs, he will loop a spectral rope around their neck and pull it tight . . . tight enough, it is said, to leave a mark or even a bruise.

Today, the ghosts are the house's most potent attraction, or so it would appear from the attention that it has received from the media. Yankee Jim is mentioned in one of the *Hellboy* movies, and the house itself was the focus of

2012's (admittedly not-especially-brilliant) movie *The Haunting of Whaley House*. Of course it appeared in the documentary screened by the Bio Channel that same year, *The Haunting of Regis Philbin*, and Regis himself remained unrepentant in the face of any scorn his admission might bring down. "You know," the doughty old warrior told the camera, "a lot of people pooh-pooh it because they can't see it. But there was something going on in that house."

There still is. *Ghost Adventures* was there in 2014; the Syfy Channel's *Fact or Faked: The Paranormal Files* has visited, and so has the Travel Channel's *America's Most Haunted*. None of which is evidence, of course, for the place actually being haunted, but those shows would not be going there if someone wasn't convinced it could be.

There are books and articles aplenty, websites dedicated to the haunting, personal anecdotes to pursue through cyberspace. And, every October, the house itself gets into the spirit of things by opening up for Halloween revelers.

All of which does raise an interesting ethical question. If one does believe in ghosts and, having acknowledged that, believes that they are the still-sentient echoes of past family, friends, or just other people, precisely what does one think *they* think about their annual exposure as a sideshow attraction?

Do they accept it as part and parcel of being a ghost? Or are they as outraged, and discomforted, as animals in a zoo might be? Lunatics in an old-time asylum, opened so that the public can walk through and poke them with sticks?

When television investigators enter their domain, littering it with cameras and trip wires, then bellowing their demands into the ether, do the ghosts just sink into a corner, their heads in their hands, unable to believe that any supposedly intelligent human being could behave so rude and crudely in somebody else's house?

And should, in years or decades to come, mankind come to acknowledge the existence of ghosts as a fact, will some future government take it upon itself to apologize to the spirit world for the mistreatment that was meted out to them by countless generations of the ignorant?

It's pleasant to think that they might. Silly, perhaps, but pleasant. And in the meantime, we will continue entering their ghostly abodes, challenging the

inhabitants to prove that they exist, by arranging little tricks and tests and obstacle courses for them to negotiate; redecorating their walls and windows with plastic cobwebs and rubber skeletons; and then going online afterward to argue over which house is really “America’s most haunted house,” while acknowledging such a title can never be the private treasure of any single home.

Most ghost hunters will have their own Top Ten, drawn from both personal and anecdotal evidence, and while they tend to agree with the top four or five destinations, actually placing them in order of haunty-ness is another matter entirely.

Still, it would take a brave researcher and a fearless investigator who would openly question the Whaley House’s ranking within that top four-or-five, and a foolhardy one who would contradict the Lemp Mansion’s place alongside it.

Particularly if they happened to be present in St. Louis, Missouri, at the time, and standing outside of the house itself.

Some relatively harmless-looking houses . . . Whaley House is a prime example—turn out to have quite the opposite reputation; and some astonishingly spooky, Munster-like dwellings are revealed to be so *un*haunted that you wonder what could be wrong with them.

And then there are places like the Lemp Mansion, which not only look and act the part, you feel you know their story even before you’ve heard it. In fact, if you happen also to be a student of American brewing history, you probably already do.

The House That Beer Built

Through the latter half of the nineteenth century, the Lemp Brewery was one of Missouri’s mightiest. It grew, as did so many others of the age, out of a family of grocers, the A. Lemp and Company concern that was founded by a German émigré, Adam Lemp, in 1838. There, on the corner of Sixth and Morgan (the site today of the Edward Jones Dome), Lemp sold a variety of goods, but the most popular were the vinegar and beer that he made to a recipe of his own creation, but brewed in what the advertisements claimed was “the true German tradition.” Indeed, so successful were these two lines that, within a couple of years, the rest of the grocery had been allowed to fall

away, and Lemp was known only for his wonderful beer.

He was an ingenious soul. The brewing process that his beers required was no friend to warm weather and high temperatures, but St. Louis, of course, knew very little else. Casting around for a solution, Lemp hit upon the idea of taking over the network of caves that lie beneath St. Louis and extend out beneath the Mississippi. Purchasing land that is today the site of the St. Louis arch, Lemp established the Western Brewery and, by the time his son William inherited the business in 1862, it was the most successful in the state.

William's business acumen only enabled it to spread even further afield. If he did not personally invent the refrigerated railroad car, that allowed beer to travel the length and breadth of the country, he was at least one of the first pioneers. By the end of the Civil War, Western had gone national.

Located at 3322 De Menil Place, a short distance from the Mississippi River, the house that bears the family name today was originally the property of William's wife's father. William purchased it from him in the late 1860s and quickly set about converting it to his needs. A new Western Brewery had now been opened close by, and the caves that lay beneath the two buildings were soon adapted for storage at one end and recreation at the other. William installed a bowling alley, a theater and even a swimming pool, heated with water piped in from the brewery.

Yet he was not a happy man. The death of his youngest son, and the passing of his best friend, Frederick Pabst, shook him badly. His declining health, too, was a concern. On the morning of February 13, 1904, shortly after breakfasting as normal, William Lemp Sr. told his servant that he wasn't feeling too good, and would be returning to his bedroom. There, he shot himself in the head.

Of all the spectral sounds that would subsequently be said to haunt the Lemp Mansion, the most heartbreaking are surely those of his eldest boy, the young William Jr., beating against the locked bedroom door, having heard the fatal shot. He ran up the stairs and threw himself at the door, kicking and pounding against the unyielding wood until somebody, a servant probably, was able to pry him away.

As the eldest son, it was William Jr.—Billy to his friends—who took over the company. But, unlike his father and his late younger brother, the new president had no head for business. The family wealth existed only so that he could spend it. He enlarged the house and modernized it wildly. He threw

extravagant parties, catered by the best hotels and staffed by the most prestigious agencies. His own household expanded to many times that which a house of that size could ordinarily require, and as word of his extravagance spread around the city, so did tales of his dissolution.

Billy, said the rumors insisted, purchased favor and friendships with prostitutes. His parties had degenerated into orgies, and local legend delighted in conjuring ever more bizarre rumors around his behavior, most of which, it turned out, were true. Animals were slaughtered for the guests' amusement. Dog and cock fighting contests were staged, and it was said that Billy also brought in a family of monkeys who would entertain guests by catching birds that had been released in the cave and eating them alive.

Scandal flew from every direction. In 1920, Billy's sister Elsa committed suicide amid reports that she had inherited the same family madness that had done for their father and which was now devouring Billy. Even his divorce from wife Lillian, in 1908, had been cruel and acrimonious; among the evidence he laid against her was a photograph of her smoking a cigarette in public.

It was an effective weapon, too. Smoking was widely regarded in polite society as a sign of loose feminine morals; two years later, in 1910, no less a personage than President Roosevelt's daughter Alice was asked to leave a Chicago hotel lobby after lighting a cigarette, *not* because anybody feared the effects of her secondhand smoke, but because the only women who smoked in hotel lobbies tended to be prostitutes. Therefore, a woman who disavowed this nicety, in the eyes of her disapproving peers, was one who probably disavowed many others.

The St. Louis court, it seems, was somewhat more enlightened than a Chicago hotel staff. The divorce was granted, and Lillian was clearly the winner, receiving custody of the couple's child and a large part of the family fortune.

The advent of Prohibition dealt a further blow to Billy Lemp. He had already changed the beer's name from Lemp to Falstaff, in the hope of disassociating it from what even he acknowledged was a disgraced family name, but sales had not recovered. Finally, a business that was valued at some $7 million was sold for just $500,000, and a few days after Christmas 1922, Billy went into his office at the Lemp mansion, just across from the room in which his father had died, and shot himself through the heart.

Another day, another scandal. It was said, before he died, that Billy had fathered a son with one of the servant girls, a monstrous monkey-faced child named Zeke. Modern sensibilities suggest the boy suffered from Down Syndrome, but there were no modern sensibilities in the Lemp Mansion. The boy was confined to an attic room in the servants' quarters, and there he remained for sixteen years. Until the day when, somehow escaping the confines of his residence, he stumbled and tumbled down the stairs, breaking his neck and perishing.

The mansion was now in the hands of Billy's brother Charles, an increasingly dark and gloomy place that was cared for by just a pair of servants, a married couple who seem to have avoided their master as much as they could. The madness, however, lived on. In May 1949, Charles took his beloved dog, a Doberman, to the basement and shot it. Then he went upstairs toward his own bedroom and, while still on the stairway, he took the same way out as his predecessors.

This House Is Haunted

For a time, the mansion was transformed into a boarding house, but its unhappy history was never far from view. Rumors that the place was haunted were inevitable, given the wealth of tragedies that had taken place within those walls, but the nature of those hauntings was the real issue—the gunshots in the night, the shameless exhibitionism of licentious all-night orgies, the wordless anguish of the monkey-faced boy, and so on and so forth. Long before the mansion was transformed into a restaurant and inn, and opened to mystery theaters, ghost tours and, inevitably in the twenty-first century, paranormal television crews, the Lemp Mansion had a name that every ghost lover knew.

Soon the only people who would stay there were those whose own private hell was sufficient to drown out the echoes of anybody else's. The Mansion was little more than a flophouse by the mid-1970s, home only to the city's alcoholic and indigent, and surely a candidate for demolition when the next round of building projects came up. Already an interstate had slashed through the mansion's original grounds.

In 1975, however, one Dick Pointer purchased the house and work began on its renovation and eventual transformation into a downtown restaurant—

work that was constantly punctuated by reports of figures seen moving through the building; of tools and equipment vanishing; of strange sounds and inexplicable feelings. Many of the workmen hired on the project simply left the site without a word, so unnerved were they by what they experienced, and the restaurant, once it was opened, would suffer a similar turnover with staff.

Glasses raising themselves from the bar and tables and hurtling through the air. “Customers” who would take a seat and then disappear, or figures that simply walked through the restaurant, to vanish through a wall. Doors that would lock and unlock themselves, a piano that played in the bar . . . without a player.

Disquiet turned to research. Few people doubted, once they learned of his tragic existence, that the presence in the attic was Zeke, the monkey-faced boy whose visage sometimes appears at the windows, pressed against the glass, and who—to the delight of sundry ghost hunters—will happily move any toys and games that they leave on the attic floor for him.

The stairway where the last of the Lemps shot himself is a scene of constant activity, as is a women’s bathroom where Billy is said to frequently stand and, somewhat creepily, watch the customers go about their business.

But the most terrible place, it was said, was the basement—the portal to the caves where Billy staged his depraved parties, and where local legend has placed even more grotesque acts than Billy himself ever dreamed of.

The restaurant staff even had a name for the place. They called it the gateway to hell.

Earthbound Animals

The most disturbing spirits, it was often said, were the animals. So many had died cruelly in those caves, torn apart by one another for the delight of Billy‘s guests, and there were occasions when those deaths seemed as though they were still taking place, to judge from the screams, the roars, the fluttering and clattering that echoed off the walls.

This is not the place to debate the manifold “-ologies” that themselves argue for and against the existence of animal ghosts. We will accept them for no better reason than an awful lot of people do seem to believe in them, and belief is often a far more convincing argument than science, theology or

common sense.

For instance . . . Among the myriad hauntings, horrors and spectral visitations recorded in author Elizabeth Tucker's *Haunted Halls*: *Ghostlore of American College Campuses*, one of the most piquant is surely the report of the squirrel that haunts a certain hall at the Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas. According to the story, the creature was inadvertently killed by workmen, who then buried it beneath the foundations of the new building they were erecting, so that it might look over the students. And so it has, ever since.

It is not the only animal that walks the halls of American learning. Tucker continues with a litany that includes "hamsters, rabbits and ducks . . . most of [whom] are friendly, with the possible exception of a duck spirit who disapproves of beer drinking."

We branch out from there to discover the country to be alive with dead animals. Ghostly animals can be as tiny as the aforementioned hamster. Or they can be as large as an elephant, as this report from the *Brooklyn Eagle*, in September 1903, makes clear.

> Visitors to Luna Park, Coney Island, have been hearing stories of the repeated appearance of the ghost of an elephant who died six months ago. Topsy, who was aged 36, was rumored to have killed a couple of circus trainers in Texas before arriving at Luna Park. Last year, she crushed one Thomas Blount to death when he stupidly fed her a lit cigarette.
>
> Then for a time Topsy got on well, doing odd jobs at Coney Island, although she would only ever obey her mahout, Willy Alt. Earlier this year, she charged some workmen and it was decided she had to go. Poisoning and shooting were considered too cruel and so on a Sunday in March, Topsy was made to step on metal plates and electrocuted.
>
> Since then, according to the keeper of another elephant, Frank Gummis, the ghost of Topsy has returned twice to warn other elephants they should leave Coney Island before they suffer the same fate.

Many of the best-attested animal spirits are household pets; indeed, even among nonbelievers, it is not unusual for the death of a beloved household pet to be followed by innumerable sightings of the beast, still going about its daily routine.

A black dog is among the spirits said to walk Star Island in Rye, New Hampshire; and a spectral cat stalks the Amos J. Blake House Museum in nearby Fitzwilliam, often accompanied by the sound of sleigh bells. There's also a black cat a-prowling the Old Coffee Pot on New Orleans's St. Peter Street, although the grimalkin is somewhat upstaged by the deadly dentist who also calls the building home. Aside from his medical interests, Dr. Xavier Deschamps was also a burgeoning hypnotist and a keen spiritualist, primarily because he believed that it was spirits who would direct him to the lost and buried treasures that he was sure littered the area.

Among his patients was a woman who, for whatever reason, the doctor believed to be clairvoyant. Their séances, however, went nowhere, and growing increasingly frustrated with failure, finally Deschamps murdered her—apparently by administering a fatal chloroform overdose. Tried, convicted and executed, the demon dentist still walks his old surgery and so, apparently, does his victim.

A House Built on Slaughter

Ghostly dentists are, perhaps, a horror too far. Living ones are terrifying enough. We return to America's most haunted homes, and a story that began in 1857, when the young son of a New Haven shirt manufacturer, William Wirt Winchester, divested a small portion of the family fortune into purchasing a company that made a new kind of gun. The Volcanic Repeater employed a lever mechanism to load bullets into the breech, a vast improvement on the old muzzle-loading rifles, but one that WWW believed could be improved even further.

In 1860, Winchester developed the Henry Rifle, a beast so easy to reload that it was said to be capable of firing one bullet every three seconds. A true repeater that arrived in the world, with sickening synchronicity, at just the moment when somebody might have need of such an effective killing machine. The American Civil War was coming, and the Union army became one of Winchester's most regular customers. He even changed the company name to celebrate its success—the Winchester Repeating Arms Company was born.

William married in 1862, a beautiful New Haven girl named Sarah Pardee, and for a few years they were happy. But their first child, a daughter named

Annie, died just nine days old, in July 1866, and Sarah plunged into a depression so profound that some of her doctors even considered her insane. A decade would pass before she became, once more, the laughing, lovely woman that William had married, but again the family's happiness was to be short-lived. Five years later, in March 1881, William was felled by pulmonary tuberculosis.

Sarah was rich. She inherited over $20 million dollars, together with a 48.9 percent share of the Winchester Repeating Arms Company and an income of about $1,000 per day, which would not be taxable until 1913. But she was also alone and, like so many other widows of the Victorian age (and otherwise), she turned to Spiritualism to ease her pain.

Which, of course it did. Wealthy widows always seemed to have their pain eased—or, at least, assuaged sufficiently to keep them smiling until it was time for the next session. Sarah's medium of choice certainly had little difficulty in summoning William's spirit to her side, and the words she echoed, Sarah was convinced, were exactly those that she could imagine her sweet William having uttered.

He told her that the family was cursed; that the malevolence was born of the terrible weapon that had made their fortune, and was enforced by the spirits of the thousands that it had already slaughtered. It had already taken her daughter and her husband, and that now it was planning to take her, too.

There was only one thing she could do. She should sell everything, abandon New Haven, and head toward the setting sun. She would find a new home in the West—guided by her husband, she would know it the moment she set eyes upon it. There she would build a new home, but it was not intended for her alone. It would also house all the spirits that had been killed by the Winchester rifle.

Sarah obeyed. She left New Haven and headed west, traveling until finally she arrived in the Santa Clara Valley in 1884. There, she discovered a certain Doctor Caldwell, busily engaged in building a six-room house for himself and his family, in the midst of 162 acres of land. Sarah bought the still incomplete project from him, tossed away the existing plans, and engaged a team of local workmen to just start building . . . and building . . . and building. For as long as her family's invention continued killing, Sarah must continue building. Forever more, new wings, new rooms, new additions needed to be constructed. And all the while she continued building, she

would continue living. The moment she stopped, she would die.

Wow! What a story! And the best thing about it is, the house is still standing, a national monument, a thirty-year saga of fear and insanity preserved for the pleasure of every future generation.

We don't care for the fact that probably 95 percent of the story we know does not, in fact, have anything to do with reality; that it started out as a curious newspaperman's fancy and exploded into the spiel of speculators and showmen. Reality bites. Give us the bunk!

The truth about Sarah Winchester and her remarkable house is told in author Mary Jo Ignoffo's wonderfully titled *Captive of the Labyrinth*, and it is a marvelous tome. Provided you didn't mind discovering that Santa, the tooth fairy and the Easter Bunny alike are all chimera, that the moon is not made out of cheese, and that freedom is just a song by Wham!

For the ghost hunter, ghost reader, or even vaguely ghost curious, the story of Winchester House is that which appears to have commenced its germination via the local *San Jose Mercury and Herald* newspaper in March 1895, apparently after Winchester declined to be interviewed for an article about her house.

"The first view of the house fills one with surprise. You mechanically rub your eyes to assure yourself that the number of turrets is not an illusion, because they are so fantastic and dreamlike. As you approach nearer, others and many others are still revealed in a bewildering spectacle. How is it possible to build on an already apparently finished house and preserve its artistic appearance through so many changes, is a query that no one can answer, but the fact remains that it continues to be done."

No one, that is, but its owner and, again, she was not talking. So the press did her explaining for her. That same *Mercury and Herald* story continued, "There are many buildings besides the house, and they, too, show the effects of the owner's odd belief. Summer-houses and conservatories are made with the most picturesque of pinnacles and there are many unexpected niches where groups of statuary are hidden. Even the barns and the granaries are built with the same prevailing idea and they are full of L's and T's which suggest that they were made in parts and are ready at any time for a resumption of the work of improvement."

And what was that "odd belief" that the author of this piece alluded to? Nothing short of death, doom and disaster. "The belief exists when work of

construction ends, disaster will result, and it is rumored among the neighbors that this superstition has resulted in the construction of domes, turrets, cupolas and towers covering territory enough for a castle."

Again we sidestep the reality of the house's construction and concentrate on what we want to believe. That, for thirty-six years, the house grew and grew. That some parts were remodeled, some were demolished and then rebuilt. Some spiraled out from the main building, some soared up toward the heavens. The house ultimately reached seven stories in height. Three elevators, forty-seven fireplaces, a mass of staircases . . . some of which didn't actually lead anyplace.

Doors opened into thin air, or onto blank walls, as the house constantly shifted around. Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, teams of the most skilled craftsmen she could find labored on the house. A railroad track was constructed, splitting away from the main line, so that fresh building materials and furnishings could be delivered to the door.

Sarah decided that the number thirteen was crucial to her design. Windows were to have thirteen panes of glass, walls were given thirteen panels, staircases were to have thirteen steps. Even the greenhouse had thirteen cupolas. Every morning, Sarah would meet with the foreman to discuss the next phase of building work, and while no conventional architect could ever have countenanced any of her decisions, still there was such a mad beauty to the house that even the workmen involved in it became hooked.

Yet it was not mad, even the chortling newspapermen admitted that. Everything was constructed with purpose. The Winchester was still killing people; spirits were still flocking to Sarah's side. Some, the majority, were peaceful. But many were angry, vengeful, cruel. At the same time as the expanding house provided a home to the ghosts that wished to dwell quietly there, it became a maddening maze to those that were blinded by fury and the need for revenge. All the while the house kept shifting, Sarah was safe from these evil spirits.

Sarah never remarried. Her servants, the workmen, and her wonkily out of tune piano were all the company she needed; them, and the spirits with whom she was in constant communion. According to rumor, she owned a solid-gold dinner service, on which vast and glorious meals would be served at parties thrown in the honor of her spirit guests. But even they could not keep her completely safe. When a great earthquake leveled so much of San Francisco

in 1906, it destroyed much of the Winchester Mansion, too.

Three of its seven stories collapsed into the gardens. Sarah herself was trapped in her room when the fireplace collapsed. Some thirty rooms were so badly damaged that it might take a lifetime to repair them—and so Sarah decided to simply board them up. That way, no matter what else was or wasn't being done on the rest of the house, it could never be said to be complete. Plus, she had it on very good authority that a band of particularly malevolent spirits had been creeping through that part of the mansion at the time of the collapse. They were still trapped in the rubble, and there they could stay.

The building work continued elsewhere. Bedrooms were added, chimneys, too, and for the next sixteen years, the Winchester mansion continued its strange and wonderful creation. When the mansion was finally sold, it was advertised as having 148 rooms, but with the caveat that this was just one of several estimates. The floor plan was so confusing that nobody had ever made a truly accurate count, and it was quite possible that there were as many as 160.

It was a house that would have perplexed even the artist and optical illusionist M. C. Escher. Workmen employed on the house told the magazine *American Weekly* that the place was a literal labyrinth; a house "where downstairs leads neither to the cellar nor upstairs to the roof."

Just as she had intended, Sarah would not live to see work on her home completed, or end. On September 4, 1922, apparently after spending a late night talking with the spirits in the séance room, she went to bed and never awoke. She was eighty-three, and nobody could say she had not led a remarkable life.

Her will left everything to her niece, Frances Marriot, who had already been handling Sarah's business affairs, although there was a lot less for her to inherit than many people expected. The mansion had devoured much of her personal fortune, and when the various safes that littered the mansion were opened, they were found to contain only socks, newspaper clippings, souvenirs of the long-dead daughter Anne, and old fishlines. Of the legendary solid-gold dinner service, not a trace was ever found.

Of course all building work ceased. But with the house having been sold to a group of investors who intended it to become a tourist attraction, it was never going to lie still.

No evidence was discovered of the alleged madness that drove Winchester to build her house, or of her fear (or otherwise) of vengeful spirits. Her estate was that of any wealthy, aged and reasonably eccentric old lady.

But that's boring, too. So, like the house it was intended to publicize, the legend continued to grow. New additions were nailed on, fresh twists and turns and corridors. New windows to look through, fresh notions to wallpaper. Robert L. Ripley, of "Believe It or Not" fame, was one of its first visitors, and of course he covered it in his column. Other incredulous authors followed. Tourism flourished. Today, the house is a California Historical Landmark and is registered with the National Park Service as "a large, odd dwelling with an unknown number of rooms."

But is it haunted?

We are told that Sarah believed there were ghosts present, although whether one could truly consider them to be haunting the mansion depends upon your personal interpretation of the word. To Sarah herself, the spirits were either visitors—some of whom might stay for a period of time, others of whom simply dropped by for dinner; or they were raiders.

Sarah aside, there were no deaths reported in the house, not even among the army of workmen whom she employed, and while the balance of her mind may have been disturbed when compared with other wealthy homeowners, she does not appear to have been unhappy in all her years there. Rather, the building work occupied her at times when other minds might have dwelled on dark thoughts, and sightings of her spirit, which naturally continues to patrol the mansion, tend to regard her as cheerfully thoughtful.

Visiting psychics do claim that there are a number of supernatural presences in the house, and some ninety years' worth of public visitors have reported the usual array of unusual encounters: footsteps in empty rooms, slamming doors, unidentified voices, cold spots, strange lights. All the usual things, in other words, that would normally seem thrilling but, here, feel dreadfully anticlimactic.

But that is perfectly understandable. The Winchester House itself is as wonderful as any supernatural encounter could be. How could the spirit world ever match it?

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The Ghostly Gazetteer: The Carolinas and the Dakotas

Nightmarish Numbness to Niggle Your Nerves

A young woman returning home from a dance, badly injured when her date lost control of the car, lies by the roadside on East Main Street in **Jamestown, North Carolina**, calling for help. Unaware, perhaps, that she died before it reached her.

A smallpox epidemic in the early nineteenth century is believed to be behind the outbreaks of poltergeist activity that visit the Attmor-Oliver House in **New Bern, North Carolina**.

Gunfire and cries still echo across the Bentonville Battlefield in **Four Oaks, North Carolina**.

Two elderly sisters killed when they drove off the side of the Broad River Bridge in **Ellenboro, North Carolina**, now stand by the side of the road, hitchhiking.

The banshee that haunts the Tar River in **Tarboro, North Carolina**, was unleashed by the final curse of a miller, drowned in the river by a group of redcoats during the Revolutionary War.

The site of the Roanoke colony, Fort Raleigh National Historic Site in **Manteo, North Carolina**, is justly haunted by the sheer weight of history, and mystery that piles own upon the place.

In 1906, two policemen and three bystanders were killed on Biltmore Avenue in **Asheville, North Carolina**, shot to death by a man named Will Harris—who then shot himself. Shadows surely pertaining to the massacre are often seen in the pizzeria that now stands on that spot.

There's a haunted elevator at the United Hospital in **Grand Forks, North Dakota**.

A child who perished in a fall down a well today walks the Children's Museum that now occupies the old Yunker farm in **Fargo, North Dakota**.

A ghostly Rubik's Cube addict haunts Kroeze Hall at the University of **Jamestown, North Dakota**.

Soldiers killed during a six-week Sioux Indian siege in 1862 still defend Fort Abercrombie in **Wahpeton, North Dakota**.

A woman in white, with a rope around her neck, crosses 137th Avenue in **Cavalier, North Dakota**, replaying the last minutes of the local lady who, having just learned that her husband had been killed in World War II, is now on her way to hang herself.

Though it also boasts all the expected ghosts, the old San Haven Sanatorium in **Dunseith, North Dakota**, is also haunted by a trespasser who fell down an elevator shaft after the hospital's closure.

General Custer possibly haunts the house he built in **Mandan, North Dakota**, and which he still called home when he left for the Battle of Little Big Horn.

A full six feet off the ground floats the farmer whose apparition is to be seen at the cemetery in **Menoken, North Dakota**.

Parkers Ferry Road in **Charleston, South Carolina**, is haunted by a preacher swinging a lantern, killed by a train while out searching for his missing daughter one night.

Jehu Gregory, plantation owner, haunts the family cemetery in the grounds of

his former home in **Union, South Carolina**.

Prince Frederick's Episcopal Church in **Georgetown, South Carolina**, is home to the spirit of its architect, a gentleman named Gunn, who slipped and fell from the roof. His final scream often splits the silent night.

Daniel Hough was a Union soldier killed during the siege of **Fort Sumter, South Carolina**. Nothing unusual about that, except the luckless Hough was killed when a gun misfired during the final one-hundred-gun salute that marked the fort's surrender. His spirit still salutes the air today.

A classic spirit photograph, a little girl still accompanied by her late parents. Photograph by G. S. Smallwood, 1905.

Everett Historical/Shutterstock.com

Talvande Mansion in **Charleston, South Carolina**, was a girl's boarding school during the 1800s. Ruled over in life by the ferocious headmistress, Madame Talvande, it would appear that she retains strong interest in the security of the building today. Also in the city, America's first female mass murderer, Lavinia Fisher, is among the spirits said still to be incarcerated in the old jailhouse. And beneath the Old Exchange Building, a basement that may once have been home to the pirate Blackbeard is alive with cold spots, slamming doors and even swinging chains.

Annie, the drowned daughter of a lighthouse man tending the Georgetown Light in **Georgetown, South Carolina**, haunts the century-old tower.

Mount Moriah Cemetery in **Deadwood, South Dakota**, is the final resting place of a small posse's worth of Wild West legends, Wild Bill Hickok, Calamity Jane and Seth Bullock included. All three and many more have reportedly been seen here over the years.

The Doner Auditorium at South Dakota State University in **Brookings, South Dakota**, is apparently haunted by a janitor who fell to his death from the old organ loft.

The stench of decaying flesh and the screams of an unknown woman are said to terrorize residents of a dormitory at the Black Hills State University in **Spearfish, South Dakota**.

A woman who froze to death in City Park, **Eagle Butte, South Dakota**, can still be heard moaning her last.

McLaughlin, South Dakota, doesn't waste time with just one or two haunted spots. The entire town is apparently haunted . . . and proud of it.

The ghostly forms of workers killed during the construction of **Mount Rushmore** are to be seen where they were buried at nearby Keystone Cemetery.

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Plantation Daze

A Southern Way of Death

If Starvation Heights is, as it perhaps ought to be, the West Coast's candidate for the most haunted location in America, the East Coast can line up some chilling contenders, too.

There is the Amityville House and Eastern State Penitentiary. There is the battlefield at Gettysburg and the White House. And there is the Myrtles Plantation, a haunting that rounds up over two hundred years worth of murders, mysteries, curses and creepiness.

The Myrtles was built in 1794 by one David Bradford, the son of Irish immigrants and, from all accounts, a very successful young man. A scholar and businessman, he was deputy attorney general for Washington County, Pennsylvania, and in 1785 he married. Over the next nine years, the Bradfords had five children. Unfortunately, their happiness did not last long.

In 1794, Bradford became bound up in the so-called Whiskey Rebellion, the infant American republic's first true test of its highest ideals. Having taken the side of those citizens who first protested, and then resisted, the soaring prices and biting taxes that were suddenly being levied upon them, Bradford found himself having to flee the luxurious home he had built in Washington, Pennsylvania, abandoning both his family and some remarkable precious and expensive possessions.

Bradford initially made his way to Pittsburgh, before then traveling south by river to the Bayou Sara, near to what is now modern St. Francisville, Louisiana. Still under Spanish control at the time, it was an area that Bradford was already familiar with, having once attempted to obtain a land grant there. Now he purchased six hundred acres of land and, in 1797, he built Laurel Grove, a (by his standards) small, eight-room house. It was this that would

blossom into the property known as the Myrtles, so named for the crape myrtles that grew throughout the property. And, for the sake of clarity, we will continue to refer to it here as the Myrtles. And that despite the argument that, to do so, is to perpetuate the same kind of lie as the ghost stories that distort the house's history.

Over the next two years, still an outlaw in American eyes, Bradford nevertheless worked hard for his homeland, a part of the negotiating team that was dedicated to formally establishing a boundary between Spanish and American territory. "Ellicott's Line," as it would be called, would finally be agreed at the end of the century, and for his part in arriving at such an equitable solution, Bradford was rewarded with a presidential pardon. Finally, he was free to bring his family down to Louisiana to live with him. And there he flourished, successful in his legal practice, and also as a professor, teaching law to aspiring youth.

Bradford died and the home passed to his eldest daughter, Sarah Mathilda, and her husband, Clark Woodrooff—himself one of Bradford's former students. And the story of the Myrtles' best-known haunting spools out from there.

The Girl with the Emerald Turban

The best known of all the spirits who are said to walk the Myrtles is Chloe, an attractive young slave girl who, says the legend, caught the eye of Clark Woodrooff during the months that Sarah Mathilda was pregnant with their third child.

An affair began—one which, the legend continues, Chloe acceded to only because she knew that to turn down her master's demands was to invite his severest displeasure. In the event, he tired of her soon enough . . . perhaps after catching Chloe eavesdropping on his family's private business. That she committed that particular sin, however, is without doubt; nor, it is said, is Woodrooff's fury at the apparent betrayal. He took a knife and sliced off one of the girl's ears.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, and certainly not unreasonably, Chloe swore revenge. One of the Woodrooff children was about to celebrate a birthday. It was the easiest thing in the world for Chloe to introduce some crushed oleander flowers, a dire poison, into the cake. It is said she intended only to

sicken the entire family. But her plans went awry. While the children and their mother ate heartily of the cake, Woodrooff himself consumed none. Which left him to watch helplessly as his family was wiped out before his eyes. Just one of his three children survived the slaughter.

Woodrooff may or may not have suspected Chloe. It didn't matter either way. The other slaves knew what she had done, and they took matters into their own hands, dragging the girl to a nearby tree and hanging her. They then cut down her body, weighted it with rocks, and threw it into the river.

The room in which the children ate their final meal has never been used for eating in since then. Woodrooff had it shut up altogether; subsequent owners converted it to a games room. But the children are still seen and heard there, playing and laughing—but crying, too, on those occasions when the other player in this terrible drama, Chloe herself, makes her appearances.

Her head swathed in the green turban she took to wearing following her disfigurement, Chloe walks the Myrtles at night, sometimes stopping to peer at sleepers—and awaken them as she does so; sometimes drifting by in a world of her own, accompanied only by the distant cries of the children she murdered.

It's all very chilling, and very believable, too. Unfortunately, a number of pesky and equally convincing historians point to some fairly grave fault lines running through the legend. Far from dying during her third pregnancy, Sarah Mathilda safely delivered a daughter, Octavia. And while the young mother *would* die young, it was not through the agency of a vengeful slave and a poisoned cake. Sarah Mathilda was a victim of the yellow fever outbreak that roared through Louisiana in the early 1820s.

It is true, too, that two of the couple's children, Cornelia Gale and James, would follow their mother to the grave, but they did so a full year or more after Sarah Mathilda. And finally, it should be pointed out that the story of Chloe herself was never heard until some 150 years after the events she is supposed to have precipitated, as an earlier legend simply of a female ghost clad in a green bonnet somehow morphed into something more tragic. And carried with it other aspects of the Myrtles's long history.

With Woodrooff never truly recovering from the death of his wife and children, by the early 1830s, he had sold the Myrtles—building, land and slaves alike—to one Ruffin Grey Stirling, a wealthy plantation owner who was constantly looking to expand his holdings.

With his own family growing, and his local prestige, too, Stirling set about completely remodeling the house. By the time he was finished, in 1850, he had more or less doubled its size, his innovations including identical ladies' and gentlemen's parlors, a formal dining room and a game room. European furnishings were followed by European craftsmen. A 107-foot-long front gallery ran the front of the house, supported by cast-iron support posts and railings. The second-story floor was raised by a full twelve inches. The finishing touch was to formally rename the property—Laurel Grove officially became the Myrtles in 1850.

It was a prosperous home, but it was also a tragic one. The Stirlings' eldest son, Lewis, died in 1854, the same year as his father. The parish records say he died of yellow fever. The legend that surrounds the house insists that he was murdered, stabbed to death and destined now to walk the halls of the home that he would never inherit.

Four more of the Stirlings' nine children would pass away before adulthood. Perhaps one of them is the long, curly-haired little girl in an ankle-length dress, cupping her hands to the window of the games room, and peering in at whoever is on the other side. Perhaps another is responsible for the grand piano that plays in the house, whether or not anybody is seated at the instrument.

Ghost Hunters' Jason Hawes and Grant Wilson investigated the Myrtles at the beginning of their show's second season.

James Leynse/SCI FI Channel/Photofest

More Murder at the Myrtles

The Civil War brought further suffering. As the tide of the conflict turned and Union forces descended so bloodily upon Louisiana, robbing and looting the once wealthy plantations, it is said that three young soldiers chanced upon the Myrtles and broke in. They expected the place, like so many others in the army's voracious path, to have been abandoned. Instead, Mary Stirling waited with a shotgun and she blasted all three intruders into extinction. Their bloodstains remain indelible on the flooring of one of the gentlemen's lounges.

Or so it said, although this story, too, remained unheard until a century or more had passed the house by. The Civil War did, however, see the plantation looted by Federal soldiers, and the family's fortune, bound up in Confederate money, was reduced to worthlessness. Somehow, however, Stirling's widow, Mary, retained control of their property, and in late 1865 she hired her daughter Sarah's husband William Drew Winter to act as her

agent and attorney, and to help her manage the plantation lands. In return, she made a gift of the Myrtles to Sarah and William.

Two years later, however, Winter was declared bankrupt and in April 1868, the Myrtles was sold to the New York Warehouse & Security Company. Somehow the family wrested it back; in April 1870, the property was sold back to Sarah. But less than a year later her husband was dead, murdered on the front porch of the house by a stranger—or, at least, by a killer who was never brought to justice.

The legend expands upon Winter's demise. Fatally wounded, but not quite dead, he is said to have staggered back into the house, passing through both the ladies' and the gentlemen's parlors, until he reached the grand staircase in the central hallway. He then crawled up the steps, as his wife descended from an upper story to meet him. They met on the seventeenth rung, and Winter died in her arms. Count the spectral footsteps that trace his final journey, it is said, and they too end on the seventeenth step.

Unfortunately, all the official records are adamant that he died where he was shot, on the porch. Whoever takes seventeen steps up the staircase, it isn't the dying William.

From thereon in, the family crumbled and, with it, its home. Sarah died in 1878, aged just forty-four. Her mother died in 1880, and the house passed to the remainder of her children, who in turn sold it to just one of their number, Stephen. By 1886, however, mounting debt had forced to him to sell it on to one Oran D. Brooks—who held the property for just three years. Finally in 1889, the Myrtles was purchased by the family whose ownership would see the plantation through the first half of the last century, the Williams clan. During whose tenancy, it is said, a caretaker was killed in 1927, during a botched robbery attempt.

There is no record of such a crime taking place, but it is said that the caretaker haunts the Myrtles regardless. Indeed, not only that, but he might also be the spirit who takes care of the haunted mirror that—as every visitor to the Myrtles could tell you—literally holds the spirits of everyone who has ever been murdered inside the house. Handprints are seen on the inside of the mirror. Faces and figures appear when it is photographed. It is a proper little portal to another dimension.

Except, if it's true that all the murder stories are basically legends and fabrications, nobody really knows who any of the people supposedly seen in

it are. Which is actually an even creepier notion. A mirror haunted by a succession of its past users, hanging now in a home that is only rumored to have ghosts of its own.

In the 1950s the Williams family divested themselves of what had clearly beome a most irksome property, and several further owners have followed in the sixty years since them. Today it is a bed and breakfast that is certainly not shy of including its haunted past in its promotional material.

To the vast majority of people who have heard of the Myrtles Plantation, then, it matters little who owns the physical property. It is its psychic ownership that is up for debate, and debate is often overlooked, too.

The Myrtles is not, after all, the only haunted house whose legends do not stand up to historical scrutiny; is not the only paranormal hot spot in which cynics say that the stories are as insubstantial as the ghosts they claim to validate. Across the country, and across the centuries, the greatest ghost stories have often been those that are themselves built upon the mere ghost of a story.

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The Ghostly Gazetteer: New Mexico to New York

Oddities and Obscurities, but No Orbs to Observe

A former TB hospital in **Deming, New Mexico**, the Holy Cross Sanatorium, is allegedly haunted by its past patients.

Nuns drift and babies cry in the night at the Sierra Vista Hospital in **Truth or Consequences, New Mexico**.

A murdered maid has never left the Lodge Resort and Spa in **Cloudcroft, New Mexico**.

The victims of two separate mining disasters haunt the Dawson Cemetery in **Raton, New Mexico**.

The banks of the Rio Grande as it rushes through **Las Cruces, New Mexico**, are the home of a woman who allegedly drowned her own children in the river, and now walks the course, calling out for them. **Bayard, New Mexico**, has a similar spirit.

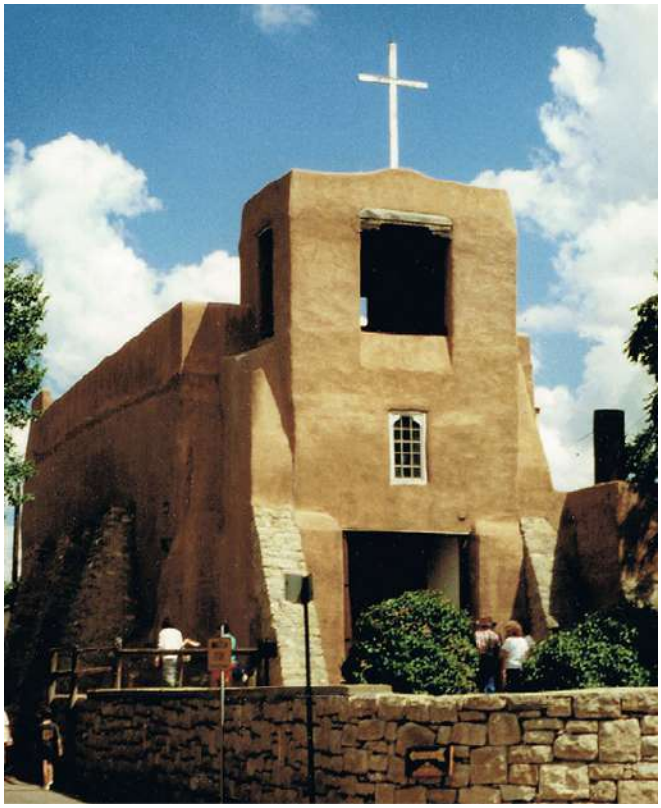
Cowboys walk the streets of **Madrid, New Mexico**, including one especially gallant band who are escorting a finely dressed lady.

Amid all the talk of aliens, visitors to **Roswell, New Mexico**, probably don't even notice the spectral boy who runs crying across Country Club Road at night.

Buddy Holly fans are not alone in believing that the old Norman Petty Studios in **Clovis, New Mexico**, are haunted by many of the great musicians . . . Buddy included . . . who passed through these doors.

Billed as “the oldest house in America,” the De Vargas Street House in Santa Fe is haunted by an old Native American who passed away there in the 1920s, and is still seen sitting quietly in a corner.

Photo by Dave Thompson



The oldest church in America, the San Miguel Mission in Santa Fe, New Mexico, stands on the site of a twelfth-century Native American adobe. Spanish solders are among the figures still to be seen here.
Photo by Dave Thompson

The Iron Island Museum in **Buffalo, New York**, was once a funeral home, and is said to be haunted by a young boy whose own burial was arranged from here.

Beardslee Castle in **St. Johnsville, New York**, stands on the site of what was once a heavily fortified homestead, destroyed when a band of Native Americans crept in, intending sabotage, and were themselves killed in a massive explosion after they accidentally set light to the ammo stores. Their stealthy spirits still stalk the darkness today.

A redcoat lieutenant named Basil Dunbar has haunted Fort Ontario in **Oswego, New York**, ever since he lost a duel there in 1759.

Fort William Henry Museum in **Lake George, New York**, had long been haunted by a ghost known as the Limper, on account of his uneven, shuffling footsteps. In the 1950s, a skeleton was unearthed here of a man with a missing foot.

A dedicated night watchman still stands sentry at the New York State Capitol in **Albany, New York**, despite having died in a fire there in 1911.

Octagon Farm in **Walton, New York**, is haunted by the sight of a young woman in nineteenth-century dress being thrown from her horse and killed.

Roxalana Druse, the last woman to be hanged in New York State, is said to haunt the cell in the **Herkimer, New York**, jail where she spent her final night, moaning and muttering to herself before ejaculating “oh oh oh” as the black hood was pulled over her head. Convicted for the murder (and subsequent dismemberment, burning and disposal) of her husband, her hanging was so badly botched that the state promptly went out and bought an electric chair.

A pond on the grounds of the University of **Rochester, New York**, is haunted by a pair of students who died there during the 1960s. They fell

through the ice one cold winter's day and drowned. Now, when the water is frozen, their faces can be seen staring out through the ice.

The observation deck of the Empire State Building in **New York City** is said to be the haunt of a beautiful woman in 1940s costume, who applies lipstick in the ladies' room, then walks out and tosses herself to the street below, passing through the safety fence that normally deters the most determined suicide. She mourns, it is said, a fiancé who perished during World War II.

Other spirits in the world's most magnificent metropolis of **New York City** include the pair of women whose love of ice skating ensured they would never leave the Wollman ice rink in Central Park, even after they passed away. Clad, respectively, in a long purple dress, and a green dress with a red velvet coat, the pair delight both in their own abilities and in the *lack* of ability in others—more than one witness, falling to the ice in shock as two spectral skaters converged upon them, reported the spirits then skating away, looking back and laughing.

There is also the story of the **New York City** factory girl, too poor to purchase a new dress for the party she had been invited to, who instead hired one from a nearby pawnbroker, not knowing that he had collected it from a less-than-scrupulous undertaker's assistant. All the while she wore the dress, the girl was assailed by a cruel voice whispering in her ear, "give me back my dress"; and a feeling of ever-growing nausea. Finally returning home, she stripped off the dress, fell into bed and died. When the coroner inspected her body, he discovered all of her natural fluids had been replaced by embalming fluid—and that the dress she had hired had been removed from a corpse just moments before it was buried.

Broadway's Belasco Theatre is haunted by its namesake, David—dead since 1931, but still keeping a solicitous eye on his old pride and joy. His spirit is frequently seen benignly looking on or passing through during other productions, usually clad in the clerical collar and cassock that the so-called Bishop of Broadway enjoyed sporting while he lived.

Photo from Architect's and Builder's Magazine *(1907)/Wikimedia Commons*

A certain Lady Lavender haunts the Lancaster Opera House in **Lancaster, New York**.

The site of the long-derelict Bennett College in **Millbrook, New York**, is still home to a handful of suicides.

A massacre of Dutch merchants and their families in **Schenectady, New York**, in 1690 is remembered by the spirits that now haunt Front Street Park and the town's Stockade Historic District.

The Victoria Suite in the Red Coach Inn in **Niagara Falls, New York**, is haunted by a bride, battered to death by her husband on her wedding day.

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Haunted Hotel Rooms

Or, A Room with a Wooooooooooo

If you don’t want to see a ghost, don’t go staying in a hotel.

Just as hospitals are a repository for pain and suffering, and graveyards a center for sorrow and despair, so hotels are the nexus for all the emotions in between. There is not a floor, and maybe not even a room, in any hotel in the world that has not seen its fair share of fighting, had its fill of arguments, witnessed violence, and likely seen a death or two, too—and every one of them an event or emotion that investigators will tell you is a primal trigger for a jolly good haunting.

An example. When a miner returned to his home in Juneau, Alaska, after months away in the hills, he was outraged to learn that his wife, facing starvation and destitution throughout his absence, had been driven into prostitution.

Rather than question his own motives, however, or the thoughtlessness of a man who would leave without making any provision for her well-being, he instead stormed over to the Alaskan Hotel and Bar, where he heard she plied her trade, and—after a bitter argument, of course—he murdered her. Both the fight and the slaying are apparently still enacted.

More? A former chef is among the apparitions who are said to haunt the Geiser Grand Hotel, in Baker City, Oregon, and is remarkable because it appears he walks without his head. Why? An accident, apparently, sometime after the hotel opened in 1889, and we who learn of his existence can only shiver as we contemplate the kind of accidents that might take place in a hotel, that are capable of removing a grown man’s head.

Some ghosts, however, are purposefully mysteries. The spectral pool of blood that routinely forms on the floor of the Black Bass Hotel in New Hope,

Pennsylvania. The unseen but certainly not unheard party whose rowdiness and volume haunts the Hotel Viking in Newport, Rhode Island.

And what could *possibly* have been so memorable about the service at the Manchester, Vermont hotel in 1865, that the ghost of Abraham Lincoln's spiritualist widow Mary Todd Lincoln should still be visiting the building that housed it, one hundred and fifty years later?

A glorious clutter of history packs the Silver Dollar Saloon in Leadville, Colorado. Doc Holliday once had a gunfight on the street outside, and who's to say that his victim is not one of the spirits who now drink at the bar?

Photo by Dave Thompson

Some hotels gather their grisliest guests through, one could say, no fault of their own. Their very size and location often saw hotels press-ganged into other purposes—many, during the Civil War, were requisitioned to serve as makeshift hospitals, a happenstance that naturally (or should that be *super*naturally) left its mark on the fabric of the building. Part of the Exchange Hotel in Gordonsville, Virginia, served in this capacity, and it is said still to house the Union corporal who was the last patient to leave the hospital when it closed.

Other civic emergencies, too, called for emergency measures. A woman in a long white dress haunts the attic stairs of the Kempton Hotel in Terry, Montana, a victim of the long ago flu outbreak that sickened so many people that the local hospital ran out of room, and the overspill was dispatched to the Kempton. In Nashville, Tennessee, the Union Station Hotel might still house

the victims of a catastrophic train crash in 1918, whose bodies were transported to the temporary morgue set up in the hotel.

Of course, hotels are extraordinarily writ large across the history of America, as the country expanded through the nineteenth century. Memories of the old Wild West, for example, are a part of the very fabric of the frontier town hotels that still stand today, and each of them has its own host of anecdotes—and more.

One day, for instance, a cowboy named Zeke walked into the Beaumont Hotel in Beaumont, Kansas. He never walked out again—he was shot in a dispute with the innkeeper and died on the spot. Which may be well he still hangs around there today. And if you should ever hear the sound of horse hooves as you climb the stairs of the Grand Union Hotel in Fort Benton, Montana, they are reminders of the day that a drunken cowhand rode his own steed in through the main entrance and up the central staircase. Which is where he was shot and killed by the barman.

In Arizona, long-dead copper miners walk the Copper Queen Hotel in Bisbee, the oldest continuously operated hotel in the state, and another reminder that it was not only businessmen and vacationers who utilized hotels in those glorious days when such establishments regarded themselves as much as a public service, as a means of gouging every last dollar from anyone foolish enough to glance at the minibar.

There were the plush hotels where a single room could cost the equivalent of a working family's monthly income. But there were many, many more that today might not even merit the term "hotel" in their description; and which, were we to go back and apply a star rating to their services, would wind up owing *us* points.

Roach traps, flea pits, barely habitable multiroom slums; a property owner only had to be of a mind to rent out rooms on a nightly basis, and there was not a power on earth that could prevent him from blatantly misspelling the more appropriate "hovel."

This was especially true in those fast-growing communities that sprang up around gold and other mineral rushes, and where a massive transient population descended more or less overnight, every one of them looking for someplace to stay.

Two local industries would be there to meet the challenge—hotels and whores. And provided the consumer was not at all discriminating, both

proved absolutely accommodating, which is one reason why so many hotel ghosts around such neighborhoods also turn out to have been prostitutes.

Their stories are rarely known—how they came to die, and at whose hands the deeds were done. Just the legend remains; a lingering shred of memory, perhaps, or even less than that. Unquestionably, and this is as true for every other haunting as it is for hotels, many stories are literally just that, stories, developing to meet the very human need for there to be some kind of "reason" for such-and-such a circumstance.

Sometimes there is a basis in reality. Sometimes the only evidence would appear to be the ghost who inspired it in the first place.

So, although we know that a certain hotel in Pleasanton, California, is haunted by what appears to be a female ghost, we do not know for certain that she is, as the legend states, a whore. Or that she is a survivor not of some past tragedy in the history of Pleasanton itself, but a relic of the settlement that stood here when the gold rush shanties of Alisal were collectively known as "the most desperate town in the west."

It's nice to think that she is, though. For when the last old-timer is dead and buried, and the last old building has been demolished for a shopping strip, the ghosts are often all we have left to connect us with our hometown's history.

Some hotel tragedies, of course, are too vast, or too horrific, to be forgotten. Fire was a constant peril, especially in the days before safety codes were conceived of, but since that time as well. In 1916, a devastating, deadly blaze destroyed the Priest Hotel in Decatur, Illinois—razing it so effectively that there was no phoenix to rise from the ashes. The site was redeveloped as the Lincoln Square Theater, but its very first patrons, and probably its last, were those guests who perished on the Priest's final fiery night on earth.

In Freemansburg, Pennsylvania, the Civil War–era Willow Grove Hotel is haunted by a little girl ghost, who may have died, and was certainly horribly injured, in a fire; and a litany of all the other spirits who were forged in similar circumstances would be as long as it would ultimately be repetitive.

So (although you will read of several in the ghostly gazetteer) would a reckoning of all the suicides that have taken place in America's hotels, and whose victims seem unable to pull themselves away from the scene. So many that it sometimes feels that there's not a window one can glance out of without running risk of seeing a body plummet past on its way to the ground floor.

Even as you read these words, the white lady might well be falling from the window of Room 812 at the Hotel Alex Johnson in Rapid City, South Dakota; and speaking of express elevators, at the Grand Hotel in Jerome, Arizona, the supposed staff of permanent residents includes a former maintenance worker. Former, because he was crushed to death by the elevator—a grisly demise that appears to have been a fairly common one as well, at least if we are to judge by the number of other elevator-aided endings that the American hotel trade can apparently vouchsafe. (see also chapter twenty-three.)

Indeed, there's another at the Baker Hotel in Mineral Wells, Texas, a gentleman who became trapped in an elevator door and was killed when the car rose (or descended) to the next floor.

Opened in 1929 and vacant since 1972, the twelve-story Mineral Wells hotel is haunted, too, by at least one suicide, red-haired Virginia who leaped to her death from one of the upper floors after she and her boyfriend broke up; and by at least one drunk, a woman who apparently decided it would be a good idea to dive into one of the hotel swimming pools . . . from the twelfth-floor balcony.

However, that was not her final indignity. Or so the story goes, although this might be an instance where urban legend grew a little too big for its own cowboy boots. Realizing that the woman was *not* one of the hotel's registered guests, and discovering that she had no ID, her body was apparently cleaned up and embalmed, and then displayed in one of the hotel windows, in the hope that a passerby might identify her.

The hotel kitchens have also been claimed to be haunted, not only by a murder victim, one of the cleaning staff; but also by her killer, the hotel chef. The sound of their final argument often rings through the corridors, and so does the sound of the old iron refrigerator door being slammed shut. The chef killed the girl and then stashed her body in there.

The Baker chain seems to have attracted misfortune. A couple of hours west on Interstate 20 will deposit you in the shadow of one of the Baker's sisters, smack in the heart of downtown Colorado City.

Tragically derelict today, the Colorado City Baker is probably better known as the scene for a flash mob zombie gathering that was captured for YouTube a couple of years back, or for its flourishing Facebook page, than for having once offered luxury to folk passing through town.

But at the height of the Cattle Capital of the West's renown, first when the Texas & Pacific Railroad rolled through, and ranchers from far and wide descended; and then when oil began flowing here in the early 1920s, the Baker was likewise at it peak.

Perched on the west side of Walnut at the junction with West First Street, five sumptuous floors rose sixty feet above the streets, with attractions that included a beautifully turned out Murals Room and, according to a 1950-era flyer, "year round air conditioning, ample free parking, adjacent facilities for conventions" . . . and ghosts! Lots and lots of ghosts.

Victims of a fire that swept through the hotel during its earliest years are apparently still dwelling in the basement, where their number includes one figure with a terrifying face, and another who is apparently armed with a sword.

The uppermost stories, meanwhile, are the preserve of a woman in a black dress—a suicide, perhaps, or maybe just a long-term visitor, enjoying the view over one of west Texas's most understated beauty spots.

The vast majority of hotels . . . No, strike that. *Every* hotel is built with one purpose. To provide a modicum of accommodation for travelers and visitors, and to send them on their way at the end of their stay. Every hotel, that is, bar one. The three-story- high, block-long World's Fair Hotel at 601-603 West Sixty-Third Street in Chicago.

If hotelier Dr. Henry Howard Holmes had had *his* way, *nobody* would have left the place. He'd have murdered every one of them.

The Holmes Death Castle is one of the most notoriously haunted murder sites in all of Chicago, and that despite the building itself having been torn down years ago. (Its site now serves as a post office.)

Holmes himself was born Herman Webster Mudgett, in 1861 in New Hampshire. Married at seventeen, he trained for a medical career at the University of Michigan Medical School, and it was there that he appears to have first honed his fascination with both fraud and violence, crime and death.

As was common practice at the time, the school laboratory maintained a healthy supply of corpses for the students to practice on—homeless, friendless indigents for the most part, the John and Jane Does of the world.

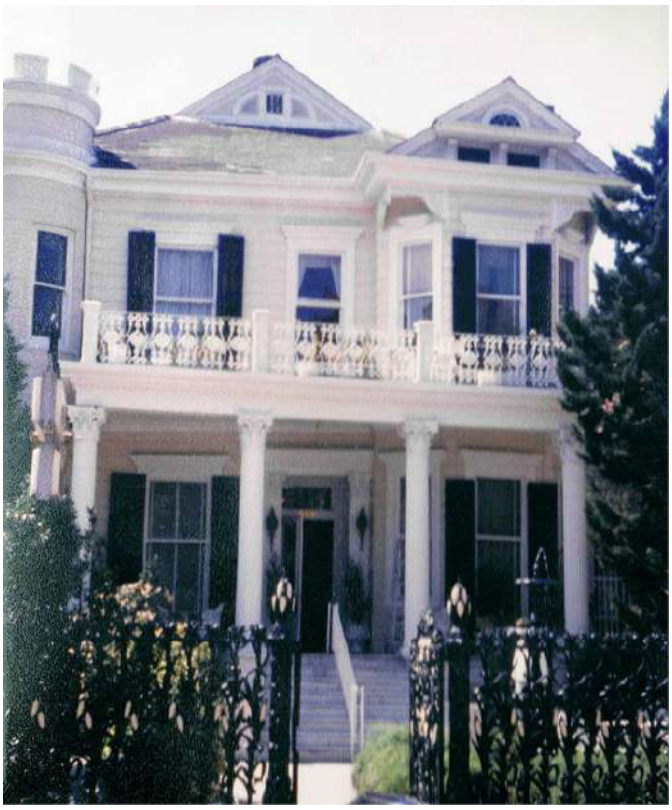
Mudgett hit upon the rather brilliant idea of giving these poor souls new names and then taking out life insurance policies on them—of course without

letting on that the insured was deceased. He would then set about beating, bruising and otherwise disfiguring the corpses, and then reporting them first as missing, and then as murder victims. Apparently he amassed a considerable amount of money in this fashion, sufficient for him to move to Chicago in 1886 to pursue a career in pharmaceuticals, beneath the name of H. H. Holmes.

He found employment at a Dr. Elizabeth Holton's drugstore on South Wallace Avenue and West Sixty-Third and, for much of the next five years, he seemed to be the model employee. Behind that respectable facade, of course, he was rotten to the core—a serial bigamist who had already reached wife number three, without divorcing numbers one and two, he was also involved in any number of dubious dealings involving black market drugs and the like. Still, when Dr. Holton announced her decision to sell up, following the death of her husband, she happily sold her drugstore to Holmes, and it was from there that he supervised the creation of his dream. Purchasing a larger plot of land directly across from the store, he announced he was building a hotel.

It was not an unlikely venture. The World's Fair was coming to Chicago in 1893, and the entire city was already thronging with developers, builders and speculators, all figuring out how they were going to make their share of the massive fortune that the event promised to drop onto Chicago's streets. One more hotel, just three miles or so from the fair grounds, was no more remarkable than one more drugstore—as soon as the new building was complete, Holmes relocated his pharmacy to its ground floor, while letting out further space to other retailers.

From the outside, it was a magnificent hotel. From the inside . . . it was an eccentric one. Other hotels had corridors that might, when you first visited, seem somewhat labyrinthine. Holmes's were basically a maze, purposefully constructed by the architect—Holmes himself—and designed for no reason other than to disorient guests.



New Orleans’s Cornstalk Hotel is haunted by a mysterious photographer, who delights in taking pictures of sleeping guests—using their own camera! One can only imagine his subjects’ surprise when they have the film developed.

Photo by Dave Thompson

Other hotels provided fire escapes and panoramic views. Holmes’s had doors that opened onto brick walls, and one hundred rooms that had no windows at all. Some rooms could only be opened from the outside, meaning that once a guest was inside, there would be no escape whatsoever. Floors and walls were set at crazy angles. Appearing so normal from the outside, inside the hotel was a literal madhouse.

It is one of those quirky coincidences of history that, at precisely the same time as Holmes was erecting his crazed hotel in Chicago, out in California Sarah Winchester was hard at work on what would become known as the Winchester Mystery House, with its own perplexing network of blind windows, dead stairways, bricked-up doors and closed-off corridors. She, however, was building to keep spirits out. Holmes was building to keep people in.

Because he wanted to murder them.

An almost all-female staff was recruited, gifted with generous life insurance

policies, and then ever so gradually depleted. Holmes's latest lover . . . a potential fourth wife, before he decreed a different fate . . . checked into the hotel one day and never checked out again. And then there were the guests. Holmes advertised in the very best women's publications and spent time at the World's Fair himself, touting for business among unaccompanied females. Who would then be taken back to the hotel, shown to their room, and then locked inside with a gas line that had never been capped, or fixed to any appliance.

Others would be shown to the huge soundproofed bank vault where Holmes recommended they deposit their valuables—and then locked inside *with* their valuables. They usually asphyxiated within a day or so, then Holmes would haul out their body, as he did his other guests, shoot them down a secret chute to the hotel basement, and then strip them of skin, remove all their organs, and finally sell their wired-together skeleton to the medical schools.

Two giant furnaces, a series of lime pits, and even some acid baths awaited whatever bodily remains Holmes could no turn a profit on, and this went on not for a few days or weeks, but for the entire six-month run of the World's Columbian Exposition. By the time it was over, and the hotel was finally emptied of out-of-towners, Holmes had quite possibly done away with over two hundred women.

It would be another year before he was arrested, more through misfortune than any effort on the behalf of any police department. Even Pinkerton's detective agency was pursuing him more for a case of horse theft than for either his activities in Chicago or elsewhere—leaving the city when his debts grew too huge, Holmes moved on to Philadelphia, Detroit, Toronto, Boston, and the body count continued to grow.

When he was finally revealed as America's first-ever mass murderer, the official body count was just twenty-seven—one-tenth, perhaps, of his actual tally. Yet he was charged with just one killing and, found guilty, he was hanged at Philadelphia County Prison, Moyamensing, on May 7, 1896. Until its demolition in 1968, his footsteps could apparently be heard taking his final walk to the gallows on the anniversary of his death.

What of his victims, however? Did *they* rest more peacefully?

No.

Of course the hotel—now and forever known to readers of the popular press as the Holmes Death Castle—was not to survive. With all evidence of

its owner's grisly handiwork having presumably been disposed of in a Christian fashion, the building mysteriously burned to the ground in August 1895. Its ruin, however, would remain in situ until as late as 1938, when it was finally torn down altogether—although some remnants of Holmes's original subterranean vaults are believed to have been incorporated into the post office that replaced the castle.

It was during this period that a veritable bookshelf worth of hauntings were whispered, rumored, recorded or published.

Not all of them are spectacular. Mysterious lights, unexplained noises, shifting shapes and sinister shadows. But full-bodied apparitions appeared in burned-out windows and blackened doorways, some standing where no floor remained any longer; others appearing to be imploring the onlooker for some kind of help as they struggled against a horror that was invisible even to them . . . choking gas, perhaps, or the constriction of an airless room.

Neighbors certainly gave the ruin a wide berth at night, claiming they could hear the screams of Holmes's victims still, or smell the fires and acids with which he disposed of their corpses; and not even the site's redevelopment has cleared away all evidence of its past. Mysterious figures and frightening feelings are still associated with it, with parts of the post office supposedly visited by sporadic poltergeist activities.

Plus, recent years and investigations have apparently added another layer of horrific mystery to the tale of Mr. Holmes—the suggestion (ludicrous though it may be) that before he began work on his horror hotel, he traveled over to London for a few weeks in the fall of 1888. Where he left behind the string of victims whom history has blamed upon Jack the Ripper.

A Happy Ending

All of which might well leave the sensitive reader doubting that he or she will ever book into a hotel again. If it's not past guests throwing themselves out of windows, and past hoteliers chopping the cleaners up for fun, then it's gunshots and fires, makeshift morgues and part-time surgeries . . . why, even in the heart of New York City, in a certain neighborhood that is so up-and-comingly gentrified today, there's a hotel that for many years was a flophouse for the bums and drunks that even the slum dwellers moved along. Of course it's been beautifully renovated since then, but all the paint in the

world cannot disguise the sickening odor of turpentine, vomit and sweat.

We hope it's a ghost. If not, they have a serious issue with the drains.

But not every hotel is a house of horrors; not every one is infested by the kind of spirit that will leave you sleeplessly staring into the dark. In fact, there's one, in the heart of Colorado, that will probably shock you more than even the most ghastly ghost would be capable of doing, for it is also a place that pop culture insists should be the most gruesomely haunted hotel of them all: the Stanley Hotel in Estes Park.

That same pop culture, after all, will tell you that the Stanley was the inspiration behind Stephen King's *The Shining*, itself rightly regarded as one of the greatest ghost stories in American literary history. It only follows that the hotel should take its place among the greatest ghost palaces in the land.

Built in 1909, the hotel was the dream child of its namesake, Freelan Oscar Stanley, of Stanley Steamer fame. Ill health had seen him move to Colorado in 1903, drawn by the clear mountain air, but he was appalled, once he arrived in Estes Park, to find a community that completely lacked in amenities. So he set about changing that, and accomplished it so effectively that today, the Stanley stands glorious sentinel at the gateway to one of the most breathtaking open spaces in America, the Rocky Mountain National Park.

Whether you've read the King novel or seen the movie that Stanley Kubrick fashioned around it; or even if you've done neither, and tried to keep an open mind about all of this, then the Stanley is already firmly entrenched in your imagination.

Its haunted hallways; its eerie elevator; and lurking like a monster spider at the center of a terrifying web, the notorious Room 217, the room in which Stephen King is said to have stayed, and the heart of all the nightmares that spiraled out from there.

But King himself has denied that this was the case, and the Stanley's current owners would appear to agree, at least if their 2014 website is to be our guide. According to them, there *is* a ghost in Room 217—Elizabeth Wilson, the hotel's chief housekeeper during its earliest days of operation. And there is a story about how she came to be there.

One night in June 1911, an electrical storm ignited some of the acetylene lanterns that provided the hotel's backup on those occasions when the building lost power. Ms. Wilson was caught in the explosion, blasted through

the floor of Room 217 to the MacGregor Room below. But her only injuries were two broken ankles, and if she should reappear to the guests in that room, it is because she is taking extra special care of them. Sometimes, says the website, “guests staying in that room encounter extra housekeeping services, including having their things put away or unpacked.”

Other rooms have offered other experiences.

In Room 407, the Earl of Dunraven, the original owner of the land upon which the hotel was erected, still smokes his beloved cherry tobacco.

In Room 418, playful children laugh and giggle.

There are objects that mysteriously move from one place to another.

Lights that turn off and on.

The sound of voices and footsteps in deserted corridors. The tinkle of the wife of the hotel’s founder, Flora Stanley, still playing the piano in the music room, while her husband passes through the offices. The sensation, after you turn out your light, that someone is making sure you are tightly tucked into bed.

But there is no *Redrum* on the bathroom mirrors, no chillingly identical twins in the elevator, no maniacally grinning caretaker crashing a chopper through the door. In fact, insists the website, “there are never any reports of sinister or evil events happening here, because there are only happy ghosts at the Stanley Hotel!”

Regardless of whether or not it is really haunted, the Stanley Hotel in Estes Park, Colorado, inspired Stephen King to create *The Shining*, and we have never looked the same way at twins since then. Here, Lisa and Louise Burns haunt the 1980 Stanley Kubrick film.

Warner Bros./Photofest

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The Ghostly Gazetteer: Ohio to Oklahoma

Prepare to Panic as the Polts Perform

Cincinnati Music Hall, in **Cincinnati, Ohio**, was said to be haunted long before workers installing a new elevator shaft in 1988 discovered human remains buried beneath the building.

The original public library in **Piqua, Ohio**, is historically haunted by a handyman who perished after falling into a vat of cleaning acid. He still goes about his duties today, although the building has long since been converted into a hotel.

Certainly one of the most novel suicides must be that of the original owner of the elaborately Tudor-esque Punderson Manor on Kinnsman Road in **Geauga, Ohio**. Distraught for whatever reason, he set sail across his own ornamental lake in a bathtub. Then, as he reached the center of the lake, he pulled out the plug, the bathtub sank, and he drowned. His ghost remains resolutely housebound, however.

A ghost in a yellow raincoat haunts the Agora Theatre and Ballroom in **Cleveland, Ohio**.

Runaway slaves seeking the sanctity of abolitionist Reverend John Rankin's home in **Ripley, Ohio**, are seen in the grounds of the still-standing house.

Dirty the bathrooms at the Civic Theatre in **Akron, Ohio**, at your own peril. The ghost of Fred the Janitor will be watching.

A stagecoach driver who was robbed, murdered and beheaded in the 1820s is the resident ghost at the Wickerham Inn in **Peebles, Ohio**.

A Civil War soldier still stands watchful at the windows of the Rider's Inn in **Painesville, Ohio**.

Do not be afraid if you see a gray cat cross the kitchen floor at the Marine Museum and Lighthouse in **Fairport Harbor, Ohio**. It is just one of many kept by the bedridden wife of a nineteenth-century lighthouse keeper, Captain Joseph Babcock.

In **Tulsa, Oklahoma**, an eight-foot-tall creature, half deer, half lady, stalks the Mohawk Park and Golf Course, while the distinctively clad spirit of the English punk musician Sid Vicious has apparently been seen at Cain's Ballroom—the scene of one of the Sex Pistols' most notorious performances on their 1978 US tour.

Nobody is certain who beheaded Aunt Jane, but her ghost still walks Fort Washita in **Durant, Oklahoma**, clad in a white dress and searching for her missing head.

Wheelock Mission in **Millerton, Oklahoma**, was apparently the scene of a dreadful massacre, a madman breaking in to an all-girl's mission and slaying everyone. His victims can still be seen, some lying dead on the floor, some slumped in chairs, some hanging from the trees.

Veterans Lake in **Sulphur, Oklahoma**, is haunted by the ghosts from a double tragedy, a young boy drowning in the lake, and his mother perishing likewise as she tried to rescue him. She still hovers over the water's surface today.

An elderly Native American man walks Rogers State University in **Claremore, Oklahoma**.

The sound of music, cowboy laments for the most part, float from the 101 Ranch in **Ponca City, Oklahoma**.

A murdered prostitute named Claudia is among the spirits said to reside at the Blue Belle Saloon in **Guthrie, Oklahoma**.

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Sexy Spirits

And the Most Beautiful Ghosts in the World

Close to forty years ago, in January 1980, journalist George Riley bemoaned in the pages of the (now-defunct) British *News of the World* newspaper, "I cannot understand why most sightings of ghosts are so often bloodcurdling events. Headless specters or ghastly nuns rattling chains and vanishing through walls.

"Surely ghosts can be fun?" he asked. "I wouldn't mind being haunted by a glamorous nude blonde with a good sense of humor. . . ."

It's a conundrum that Hollywood has wrestled with frequently, of course—ghost-meets-mortal love stories have haunted the imagination for decades, a catalog that is surely topped by *The Ghost and Mrs. Muir* (both on the big screen and the small one); Daryl Hannah and Steve Guttenberg in *High Spirits*; Patrick Swayze and Demi Moore in *Ghost*; Dan Aykroyd and what appears to be a somewhat oral spook in *Ghostbusters*; and even the self-repairing rotting corpse that sits in Jack Nicholson's bathtub in *The Shining.*

All rank among those moments when the viewer could be excused for wishing there was more substance to the old legends of incubi and succubi than there normally appears to be. And perhaps there is, and the only reason we don't all hear about it is because the recipients of the spectral affections are too polite, or modest, to boast about it. Plus, can you really imagine the cast of reality TV's latest Po-Faced Paranormal Squad setting up in the hope of filming a sensual spirit in flagrante delicto?

Errrr . . . don't answer that.

Or course, there is a name for it—spectrophilia; there's a few self-appointed experts in the field as well; and, contrary to our earlier assertion,

there are a few “eyewitness” reports as well. According to *Paranormal Activity 2* actress Natasha Blasick, talking to British TV’s *This Morning*, “I could feel that somebody was touching me and the hands were pushing me against my will. And I could feel the weight of the body on top of me. My body was pushed in different directions. And at first I was very confused with all that, then I just decided to relax and it was really, really pleasurable.”

Reaching out from beyond the grave, Daryl Hannah offers to show Steve Guttenberg the true meaning of the expression “high spirits,” in the 1988 movie of the same name.

TriStar/Photofest

The late Anna Nicole Smith was similarly forthcoming in a 1994 interview with *FHM* magazine: “A ghost would crawl up my leg and have sex with me at an apartment a long time ago in Texas. I used to think it was my boyfriend, then one day I woke up and found it wasn’t.”

In 2012, Kesha told radio host Ryan Seacrest, “I had a couple of experiences . . . [but] I don’t know his name! He was a ghost! I’m very open to it.” And the Travel Channel’s *Ghostly Lovers* documentary managed to track down a number of other participants, just in time for Valentine’s Day that same year.

All of which is very nice, and coming soon to one of those peculiarly lavish “gentleman’s magazines” that glimmer from the top shelf of certain types of convenience stores near you. A beautiful ghost, or even a sexy ghost, however, does not necessarily translate automatically to a promiscuous ghost. Not a hint of impropriety has ever been associated, for instance, with the

spirit
of Marilyn Monroe, and that despite her alleged penchant for appearing (sometimes clothed, sometimes otherwise) in the full-length mirror that stands in a certain room at the Roosevelt Hotel in Hollywood. Montgomery Clift, another regular at that same establishment, might occasionally place one hand on a pretty girl's shoulder, and if the phone is ever found off the hook in Room 928, it tends to mean that Monty doesn't want to be disturbed. But that doesn't mean he's got anybody with him. He used to book that room so he could learn his lines away from any distractions.

Marilyn Monroe still occasionally undresses before a certain mirror at Hollywood's Roosevelt Hotel.
20th Century-Fox/Photofest

Thelma Todd, such a bewitchingly bubbly presence in the films of Buster Keaton and the Marx Brothers, remains on the premises where, in the early 1930s, she opened Thelma Todd's Sidewalk Café on the Pacific Coast Highway in Castellammare, California. But her behavior is impeccable.

And the woman who, in 1914, was voted the Most Beautiful Girl in New York—and who was to beguile the rest of America, too, before her terrible death—still haunts the theater where she made her name.

Olive Thomas was a Ziegfeld girl, but she was so much more than that. She

modeled for some of the most influential artists of the age, including Harrison Fisher, Raphael Kirchner, and Haskell Coffin and she appeared on numerous magazine covers, including the then all-powerful *Saturday Evening Post*.

But her performances for Ziegfeld were the best, as indeed they had to be. Florenz Ziegfeld was the most impressive, important and influential theatrical presence in the pre-Depression United States of America, and he did not arrive at that status by packing his productions with Plain Janes.

It did not matter whether a performer was the star of the show, at the front of the stage for the entire production; or a bit player who danced in the shadows for thirty seconds. If she did not meet Ziegfeld's standards of beauty, then she would not even get through the door for the audition.

Olive Thomas had no such difficulty. Nineteen years of age when she arrived in New York City in 1913 . . . and already separated from her first husband, whom she married when she was fifteen . . . within a year, the erstwhile Miss Duffy had been declared "the Most Beautiful Girl in New York City," as she won a competition of that same title, staged by commercial artist Howard Chandler Christy.

A host of modeling assignments followed, and by early 1915, she was in rehearsals for Ziegfeld as he schemed his latest spectacular, the *Ziegfeld Midnight Frolic.* It opened on June 21, 1915, in the great impresario's series of Roof Garden Revues at the New Amsterdam Theater in New York City—and was both an instant sensation and an instant scandal.

Unlike his regular Follies, his Midnight Frolics in many ways lived up to their name . . . the crowning glory of the "Cathedral of Beauty" that he viewed as his life's work, the frolics were late night and they were extraordinarily lascivious, at least by the standards of the time. Not perhaps to censorious standards, but we note that the portrait of Olive that advertised the *Ziegfeld Midnight Frolic* has most recently been appropriated as cover art for a book about prostitution in the Old West, and there was certainly no shortage of lewd rumors swirling around both the production and its performers. The German ambassador to the United States, Albrecht von Bernstorff, was so impressed by Olive's performance that he made her a gift of a $10,000 string of pearls.

Olive Thomas, among the most bewitching, and tragic, of all Ziegfeld's girls, posing with a Buddha statue circa 1920.

Bradley Studios/Wikimedia Commons

Olive's career continued to soar. An affair with Ziegfeld himself did not, of course, harm her ascent; but she was the first-ever Vargas Girl, painted topless, holding a rose. The portrait, *Memories of Olive*, is often cited among the most lifelike and alluring of all Vargas's many, and so distinctive, paintings. And in 1916, she moved to Hollywood, where she immediately found a role in the tenth and latest episode of the serial movie *Beatrice Fairfax*.

The following year, she starred in her first feature, *A Girl Like That*, then earned more headlines when she met and married Jack Pickford, the younger brother of actress Mary. Her contract with Selznick Pictures earned her a near-unprecedented $2,500 a week, and in 1919 she took on the role that established her not simply as a Hollywood star, but as a cultural icon—she was the titular character in *The Flapper*, the movie that introduced an entire new breed of carefree, self-reliant woman to America.

And then she died.

Attempting to patch up their faltering marriage, she and her husband took a second honeymoon in Paris. And it was in the early hours of June 5, 1920, that Jack was awakened by her crying out, "Oh my God." He ran to the bathroom and found her writhing in agony. Beside her, opened, lay an open

bottle of mercury bichloride tablets . . . which, some versions of the ensuing legend insist, Jack had been prescribed to treat a certain delicate skin condition.

Other stories remind us that they were a common sight in period bathrooms, used as both a household antiseptic and a disinfectant. Either way, you were supposed to dissolve them in water and apply them topically. Ingested, they could be, and generally were, fatal. In fact, five years before Olive's death, in 1915, another actress, Nellie Elsing, died a similar death in Ocean Park, California.

The ministrations of the American Hospital in Paris were certainly in vain —although it took poor Olive several days to die—and the medical examiner returned a verdict of accidental death. His best guess was that she mistook the blue bottle, with its French language label, for something else . . . a headache tablet, maybe. But rumor was swift to refute that. She committed suicide, it was said, after discovering that she had contracted her husband's STD. That Pickford murdered her when it became obvious that their reconciliation was not working. The Hollywood scandal sheets were as brutal then as they are today, and because we will never know what really happened, both scenarios are possible. But neither, insisted Olive's friends and family, seems likely.

Olive's body returned to the United States; her spirit returned to New York; and back to the New Amsterdam as well. Just days after her death, one of the stagehands saw her walking backstage. Other, similar, sightings followed, and they continue to this day.

One of the best attested sightings occurred in 1952, and is repeated in Charles Higham's 1972 book *Ziegfeld*. A handyman named Irving Cohn was busy in the backstage workshop when he got the distinct feeling that somebody was watching him. He turned and saw a beautiful redhead standing in the doorway. She wore a white dress, and a gold sash emblazoned with the name "Olive."

Cohn was not a particularly curious man, or a student of theatrical history. He simply assumed she was a performer who had turned up early, or an amateur hoping to give an impromptu audition. When he asked what she wanted, she turned on her heels and ran up a nearby flight of stairs. Cohn returned to his work.

A couple of weeks later, he saw her again, walking down the stairs toward the stage. This time, however, Cohn was not alone. An old electrician named

Charlie Breest was with him, standing at the top of a ladder—but he couldn't see a thing. So Cohn described the girl . . . and Breest almost tumbled from his perch. He knew precisely who the mysterious beauty was.

When a new production arrives at the theater, she is always on hand to watch the preparations; when a title she remembers from her own lifetime, her earthbound spirit will most likely be in attendance. She was always around during the renovations that transformed what was becoming a somewhat run-down venue in the 1990s, and early on in *The Lion King*'s residency, a stagehand saw what he swore were a pair of spectral legs climbing the stairs to the stage from the trap room beneath it.

In her white, or sometimes green, dress, with her long red hair, and her dark, dancing eyes, she has even been known to speak to people—always men, though, never women.

Only occasionally, however, does she seem to acknowledge the tragedy that ended her brilliant career—in one hand, she sometimes holds a little blue glass bottle. The rest of the time, she seems happy and even playful, occasionally turning out lights or interfering with equipment (one night, again during *The Lion King*, she allegedly jammed the turntable), and giggling when she is asked to behave herself. Her portrait still hangs by the stage door, and every night, as the lights are turned out and the last crew members and staff leave the building, they make a point of saying "good night" to Olive.

Some nights, she even says "good night" back to them.

The New Amsterdam is not, of course, America's only haunted theater, or even New York City's. All around the world, the theater is both the source and, more often than not, the betrayer of so many dreams and ambitions; the focal point of so much energy and effort. Success on the stage is to place oneself among the gods. Failure is to embrace a living hell. But, perhaps, it takes a very special kind of spirit to continue walking a theater after death . . . one who adamantly refuses to take, or acknowledge, that final bow.

At the Palace Theatre, the ghost of Louis Borsalino is said to foretell the death, within the year, of anybody who witnesses him—he himself perished here in the 1950s, when his high-wire acrobatic team, the Four Casting Pearls, were performing at a vaudeville revival show. Working without a safety net, Borsalino slipped, with inevitable, horrifying consequences. Why he is punishing audiences for his fate has not been explained by the legend—but there again, why would it be?

Besides, Borsalino is only one of the Palace's resident ghosts. There are said to be over one hundred spooks crowding the place, including a little boy in the mezzanine, a very pouty little girl in the balcony, a female cellist in the orchestra pit, a besuited gent in the office and, topping the bill, Judy Garland, who also performed there in the Eisenhower years.

Other towns, other ghosts. For sixty years, the Capitol Theater in Clearwater, Florida, was said to be haunted by a man named Bill Neville, who was murdered by tourists on the theater's balcony, and whose corpse was then stashed away someplace, never to be found. Not until renovation work was carried out in the early 1980s, and the unfortunate Neville's body was discovered, did anyone realize the stories were true.

Spectral sewing machines run through the night at the Elkhart Civic Theater in Bristol, Indiana—operated, perhaps, by the dark-haired woman who is sometimes seen floating through the air. Abraham Lincoln still revisits the site of his assassination, the Old Ford's Theater in DC; and a former Civil War hospital, the Longstreet Theater in Columbia, South Carolina, still replays the operations, amputations and deaths that were once daily occurrences there.

The great opera singer Enrico Caruso was in Tulsa, Oklahoma, performing at the Brady Theater, when he caught the cold that ultimately led to his death in 1921. It is a strange place for him to choose to haunt, then, but apparently he does. A boy named Bobby, killed when one of the basement boilers exploded, walks the KiMo Theater in Albuquerque, New Mexico; and the Bagdad Theater in Portland, Oregon, remains home to a man who hanged himself backstage.

The box office at the New Amsterdam (circa 1920), the New York theater where Olive Thomas still makes regular appearances.

Photofest

Sometimes, a person does not even need to set foot in the theater to haunt it. The Mount Baker Theater in Bellingham, Washington, is haunted by a young lady named Judy, whose own home was bulldozed to make way for the construction of the theater itself; and a little girl killed in an auto accident *outside* the Orpheum Theater in Memphis, Tennessee, is now to be seen inside, watching the show.

The most legendary spirits, however, remain those who were already legends in their own lifetime. Producer and impresario David Belasco both worked in and lived above the New York theater that bore his name, and though he died in 1931, he never relinquished ownership of his private box. Indeed, if his spirit was seen sitting there on opening night, it meant that the play in question was destined to be a hit. (Samuel “Roxy” Rothafel, the creator of the Rockettes, has played a similar role at Radio City Music Hall in the decades since his death in 1936.)

On other occasions, Belasco will watch rehearsals from the balcony, or walk backstage to mix with the cast, even pinching the occasional behind as he passes. His cigar smoke is a constant presence, and up in what was his duplex apartment, laughter, singing and footsteps are heard. His personal elevator was dismantled long ago, but he is still known to ride it.

If only bottom-pinching was Rudolph Valentino's sole pursuit!

In her 1990 book *Hollywood and the Supernatural*, author Sherry Hansen-Steiger tells of the (unnamed) Hollywood actress who found herself, one night, "drifting off to sleep . . . in the old apartment building . . . which, according to Hollywood tradition, was once an elegant party site favored by . . ." *the* number one heartthrob of the silent movies era.

The experience began with the impression that there was somebody else in the room. "For several minutes the twenty-eight-year-old actress was too paralyzed by fear to move," wrote Hansen-Steiger. "A body of what she assumed to be a man then stretched out beside her . . . pressed up to her and began breathing heavily." At which point she opened her eyes, to see "the handsome face of Valentino lying on my pillow. I was so terrified . . . that I fainted."

And missed out on what would likely have been an even more thrilling story than that.

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The Ghostly Gazetteer: Oregon to Pennsylvania

Queer Quonundrums to Make You Quake

A woman hanged for witchcraft walks laughing through the Lafayette Pioneer Cemetery in **Dayton, Oregon**.

A newlywed named Elizabeth, who hanged herself at **Oregon Caves** National Monument after she caught her husband with another woman, is said to still frequent the scene of her despair.

The picturesquely named **Rhododendron Village** was a popular rest stop for pioneers on the Oregon Trail. But many never left—dying en route and being buried at the campsite.

The Multnomah County Poor Farm in **Troutdale, Oregon**, was home to a variety of elderly, disabled and differently abled souls in the early twentieth century. Many of them remain there still.

The network of underground tunnels that once honeycombed **Pendleton, Oregon**, has been largely closed off. But areas are still open, and a variety of apparitions have been seen. Similar tunnels beneath **Portland**'s Chinatown district share much the same reputation.

Witches and imps are among the supernatural creatures who can be found at the extinct volcano Malheur Butte, in **Ontario, Oregon**.

A horse thief and his dog, respectively hanged and shot by a nineteenth-

century lynch mob, haunt Scaponia Park in **Scappoose, Oregon**.

A murdered mobster, shot near the restrooms, walks the old Black Horse Inn in **Northampton, Pennsylvania**.

Gideon Gilpin's farmhouse, better known as Lafayette's quarters for the battle of Brandywine, Pennsylvania, might still be occupied by the Marquis de Lafayette.

Photo by Dave Thompson

The Riverside Inn in **Cambridge Springs, Pennsylvania**, has a ghost that apparently likes to join guests in bed.

Duquesne University in **Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania**, has accumulated a number of ghosts throughout its 130-year history, including a young man with apparent anger management problems in one of the freshman residence halls; a contrarily polite old gent who holds open the door to one of the walkways; disembodied screams and clanking chains; and, in the Fisher Hall cafeteria, a sibilant voice prone to whispering "leave it off" when someone goes to turn the light on.

Benjamin Franklin is among the spirits known to favor Growden Mansion in **Bensalem, Pennsylvania**, out in the grounds during thunderstorms to fly his kite. Another local home, the Pen Ryn Mansion, sees a woman on black horseback, brandishing a whip, ride out every Christmas Eve.

The White Woman is the most common of the specters who haunt the Bureau of State Library in **Harrisburg, Pennsylvania**.

The scene of several hangings during the eighteenth century, the Jean Bonnet Tavern in **Bedford, Pennsylvania**, still echoes to the creaking of the executioner's handiwork.

Fort Mifflin in **Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**, is the scene of many hauntings, including a colonial soldier named Amos, still diligently cleaning his weapon, and the blacksmith Jacob Sauer. Elsewhere in Philly, Pine Street is the purported home of the Hag of Pine Street, an old woman who glares at passersby or waves her walking stick in a menacing fashion.

The escapologist Harry Houdini is, unsurprisingly, the resident spirit at the Houdini Museum in **Scranton, Pennsylvania**. Although you'd think he'd have found a way out by now. . . .

The corner building where Scarlett Alley meets South Union Street in **Kennett Square, Pennsylvania**, is said to be haunted by a little girl with long black hair.

The old sports grounds at **Bethlehem, Pennsylvania**, are said by some to still be home to the legendary Bethlehem Steel soccer team, champions of America in the early 1920s.

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We Admit They Exist

But What Do They Want?

A true story, taken from one of the early classics of modern ghost stories, the very aptly titled *Accredited Ghost Stories*, published in 1823 by T. M. Jarvis.

> Early in the American war, Major Blomberg the father of Dr. Blomberg was expected to join his regiment which was at the time on service in the island of Dominica. His period of absence had expired and his brother officers eagerly anticipating his return as vessel after vessel arrived from England without conveying the looked for passenger declared one to another, "Well at all events he must come in the next."
>
> His presence in the island now became indispensable and the governor impatient of so long an absence was on the point of writing a remonstrance on the subject to the authorities in this country, when as he was sitting at night in his study with his secretary and remarking on the conduct of the absentee with no very favorable or lenient expressions, a step was heard to ascend the stairs and walk along the passage without.
>
> "Who can it be?" exclaimed the governor, "intruding at so late an hour."
>
> "It is Blomberg's step," replied the secretary.
>
> "The very man himself," said the governor and as he spoke the door opened and Major Blomberg stood before them.
>
> The major advanced towards the table at which the gentlemen were sitting and flung himself into a chair opposite the governor. There was something hurried in his manner, a forgetfulness of all the ordinary forms of greeting and, abruptly saying "I must converse with you

alone," he gave a sign for the secretary to retreat. The sign was obeyed.

There was an air of conscious superiority about the manner of the visitor that admitted no dispute. "On your return to England," he continued, as soon as the apartment was cleared of the objectionable witness. "On your return to England, you will go to a farm house near the village of _____ in Dorsetshire. You will there find two children, they are mine, the offspring and the orphans of my secret marriage. Be the guardian to those parentless infants. To prove their legitimacy and their consequent right to my property, you must demand of the woman with whom they are placed at nurse the red Morocco case, which was committed to her charge. Open it, it contains the necessary papers. Adieu. You will see me no more."

Major Blomberg instantly withdrew.

The Governor of Dominica surprised at the commission at the abrupt entrance and the abrupt departure, rang the bell to desire some of his household to follow the major and request his return. None had seen him enter, none had witnessed his exit. It was strange, it was passing strange.

There soon after arrived intelligence that Major Blomberg had embarked on board a vessel for Dominica which had been dismasted in a storm at sea and was supposed to have subsequently sunk, as she was never more heard of about the time in which the figure had appeared to the governor and his secretary.

All that Major Blomberg had communicated was carefully stamped in the memory of his friend. On his return to England, which occurred in a few months after the apparition above described had been seen by the governor, he immediately hastened to the village in Dorsetshire and to the house in which the children were resident. He found them, he asked for the casket, it was immediately surrendered.

The legitimacy and the claims of the orphans of Blomberg were established and they were admitted to the enjoyment of their rights without any controversy or dispute.

This tale was related to the late Queen Charlotte and so deeply interested her, that she immediately adopted the son as the object of her peculiar care and favor. He was brought to Windsor and educated with his present Majesty, of whom he has through life, been the favorite, the

companion and the friend.

Ghosts, as we have seen by now, haunt for many different reasons. Some seek revenge, some seek to right wrongs. Some do it out of mischief, some because they are bored. And some, like Major Blomberg, do it because they need to furnish a piece of information that, had they had an inkling that their life was so close to its end, they would already have acted upon themselves.

Some, again like Major Blomberg, are capable of making the final journey themselves, to pass on the message to a person they trust, in the knowledge that their wishes will be acted upon. But others require an intermediary. A human bridge between the worlds of the living and the dead. A medium. A spiritualist.

And there's a lot of them out there. There always has been.

The Witch of Endor might well be the first *recorded* medium, but she was by no means the first person to be said to commune with the dead. Indeed, no matter how far society, religion and science have strayed from the notion that such a thing is desirable, or even possible, the idea that the dead can, and will, talk is one of the most unifying beliefs in human history. In every age, in every culture, people have believed. And have done so fervently enough that there were times when their belief itself became believable.

Although many of the beliefs and practices that we today call "Spiritualism" can be dated deep into history, Spiritualism as a science of sorts itself dates back no further than the late 1840s, to the mischief and trickery of a pair of sisters from Hydesville, New York, about twenty miles west of Rochester.

Or not, as the case may be. For what might seem an open-and-shut case of adolescent hijinks getting completely out of control . . . to the extent, incredible though it seems, that they probably changed the course of Western society and philosophy . . . also stands as one of the most remarkable ghost stories in American history.

The Hydesville Rappologists

In November 1904, children playing in the basement of the dilapidated old "ghost house" in Hydesville somehow dislodged, or dismantled, a crumbling old wall in one corner of the building—and out from behind it there tumbled

a human skeleton.

The children rushed out, screaming and shouting, the adults poured in to investigate the cause of the ruckus. It was indeed a skeleton, and with it a few rags suggested the clothes it had once worn and the profession it had once pursued. It was the body of a peddler, announced the medical examiner. A tin box found alongside the body was of a sort that peddlers frequently carried, and it was inscribed with a name, Charles B. Rosna. It had lain undisturbed for probably sixty years.

Hydesville was a small town, the kind of place that thrived upon whispers and gossip. Except where the ghost house was concerned. Everybody in town knew about that place, and everybody had an opinion about it too. They even knew about the dead peddler. Back in the 1840s, it was said, a man named John Bell had murdered a peddler name of Charles B. Rosna, in the bedroom of that very house. Sliced open his throat with a butcher's knife, and then carried the corpse down to the basement and buried it ten feet down. Then he scooped up the best of the man's belongings, and the $500 cash that was the peddler's earthly fortune, and moved to another town.

And how did people know all this?

Because the peddler's ghost told them, through the mouthpiece of two very remarkable little girls named Maggie and Katy Fox.

According to the cynics who have piled doubt and scorn upon the legend for the past 170 years, it is a remarkable but very straightforward story. Bored throughout the winter of 1847–1848, eleven-year-old Katy Fox and her big sister, fifteen-year-old Maggie, got it into their heads to convince their mother that the farmhouse home to which they had recently moved was haunted.

They employed a wide variety of tricks, everything from apples lowered by string onto the stairs, to create the sound of footsteps, to popping and cracking the knuckles of their toes in the dead of night.

Mom was convinced that the house was haunted. Dad, a blacksmith, was less sure; he never doubted that a loose board or shutter was more likely the culprit. But the game went on for a few weeks until the girls began tiring of the adventure.

They planned one final hurrah, a no-holds-barred performance during which they would actually commune with who- or whatever it was that haunted their home. They took just one precaution against the parental wrath

that would undoubtedly befall them should their mother discover they were tricking her all along. They would wait until March 31 before staging their show. The following day, after all, would be April Fools'. They could blame that for everything.

Lying in bed, the girls began the show with their familiar rapping. As usual, their mother took a candle and began searching the house. But tonight, when she reached the bed that the two girls shared, Katy spoke aloud. "Mr. Split-foot," she commanded, naming the "spirit" with a familiar term for the Devil. "Do as I do." She snapped her fingers—and the ghost snapped back.

Maggie clapped her hands four times. Mr. Split-foot rapped four times in reply. Again and again the girls demonstrated the intelligence of the unseen entity that haunted their home, so terrifying their poor mother that, at last, Katy did deliver the April Fools' defense. Their mother, however, did not believe her. The house, she knew, was haunted, and now it was she who would prove it to her family, by asking the ghost to count to ten.

It did so.

"How many children have I borne?" she asked.

There were seven raps.

"And how many still live?"

Six raps.

"What are their ages?"

A succession of raps. Each one correct.

The conversation continued, the girls aware all along that if they could just remain silent when their mother asked a question, all of this would be over. But they could not bring themselves to do it, could not pluck up the courage to admit to their mother that they had been fooling her all along. For other questions would then be asked and, at some point, their parents would lose patience with it all. Which, in turn, could unleash all manner of punishments.

There was just one solution. The charade had to be maintained.

By the end of the evening, Mrs. Fox had elicited an extraordinary amount of information about her unknown houseguest. He had been married, and he had died two years previous, aged thirty-one. He had five children. His killer was still alive and had never been brought to justice. And when Mrs. Fox asked if he would mind her introducing him to some of her neighbors, beginning with Mary Redfield from the house next door, the girls rapped their consent.

All that was to follow . . . which is essentially the entire history of Spiritualism as it unfolded over the next eighty years . . . sprang from the events ensuing. In 1888, in a memoir titled hopefully, but inaccurately, *The Death Blow to Spiritualism*, Maggie admitted, "There is no such thing as a spirit manifestation. That I have been mainly instrumental in perpetrating the fraud of Spiritualism upon a too-confiding public many of you already know. It is the greatest sorrow of my life . . . When I began this deception, I was too young to know right from wrong."

What she did know were the answers to the questions that the family's neighbors wanted to hear. The little facts about her life that so satisfied the matronly Mary Redfield that she promptly went out to fetch in other friends and neighbors.

The rapping quickly grew monotonous. It was too slow, a neighbor complained. Too easily misunderstood. One visitor devised a code, each letter of the alphabet assigned a numerical equivalent that the ghost could rap out, spelling single words or even creating complete sentences. The ghost agreed to use it.

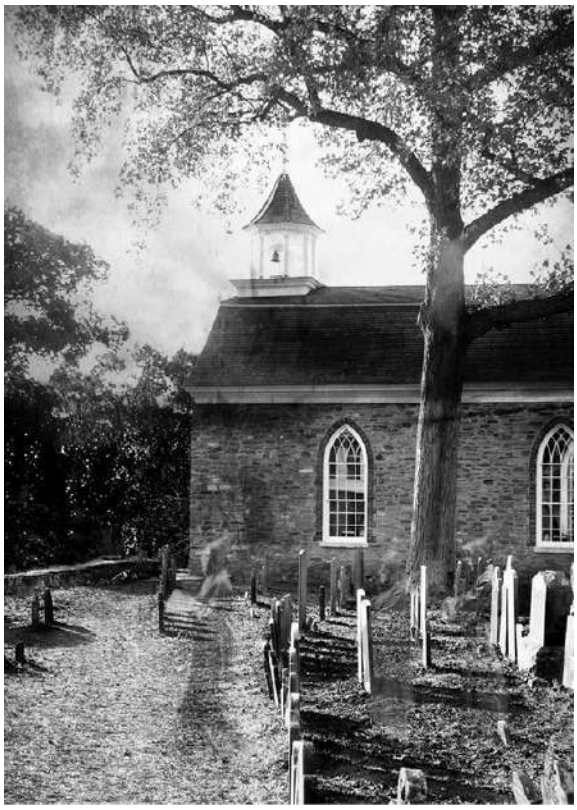
Further details about the ghost were delivered—he was a peddler, murdered and buried in the basement of that very farmhouse. Immediately, a group of men rushed down to the basement to begin excavations, only to be thwarted by a freshwater stream than ran beneath the house, and which promptly rose up to flood the basement. They never thought to knock down a wall, but why would they? The ghost claimed to have been buried deep, and he ought to know.

The story was believed, and was soon confirmed as well. Nineteen-year-old Lucretia Pulver, a local girl, had worked at the farmhouse while another family, headed by one John Bell, had lived there. During which time, she explained, a foot peddler came to call. That was around the same time, she continued, that she was sent away for a few days by her employer, and when she returned, the peddler had left the neighborhood, leaving no trace of himself but two torn coats that Lucretia was asked to repair, and a handful of silver thimbles that Mrs. Bell seemed very proud of.

Circumstantial though it was, Lucretia's story was damning enough if you wanted to believe it, but what happened next was even more so. The family that lived in the house after the Bells, and immediately before the Foxes, claimed to have left because the house was haunted. They heard strange

rapping sounds, and their servant Jane saw a figure, a man in gray pants, black cap and a frock coat, where no figure should have been standing. It was precisely the same outfit that Lucretia recalled the peddler wearing.

There appears to be no record of John Bell ever being sought out and questioned about any of this. Nor of any further attempts to excavate the basement, once a few more weeks, and floods, had passed by.



Another of J. R. Pepper's so-beguiling spectral images.

© *J. R. Pepper*

Nor, and this is surely the hook upon which the entire story hangs, did anybody seem to ask how the girls knew so much about the killing.

Had Lucretia Pulver told them what little she knew and surmised the rest of the tale? Possibly. But she had not known the peddler's name, nor was she aware that the body lay in the basement, *nor even if he had been killed*.

Had a friend or relative of the other family, the Weekmans, said something? Again, possibly, but they knew even less about the true facts of the case than Lucretia.

Had the girls themselves been into the basement and discovered the body

themselves? And then pieced together the murder story from there? Very unlikely.

All of which leaves just one solution.

The peddler *must* have told them himself.

He must have told them his name, he must have told them his profession, and he must have told then roughly where he was buried. And all of this information was delivered half a decade after his death. There is no other explanation.

Or, perhaps there is a very straightforward solution, one in which straight reportage has simply been embroidered by backdated facts, as photographer and researcher J. R. Pepper explains. Pointing out, first, that "a number of bones were animal bones," and then adding the suggestion, drawn from period reporting, "that someone most likely placed the bones at that location," she continues, "They couldn't have known about the body. But they certainly could fuel preexisting suspicions and rumors."

> The house was already reputed to be haunted. All they did was confirm what the locals had already heard. Additionally, they were mere children, so no one would have suspected they were lying. Early on, the Fox sisters could not have imagined that what they thought was a harmless trick on their mother would balloon into a media frenzy.
>
> They claimed that a body was in the basement, which would confirm rumors that the house was haunted. But they could have never expected people to take it so seriously that people would try to dig up the basement of their home. They made a one-in-a-million guess that happened to have some truth to it, [albeit] not until years later. The body that was found, however, was never confirmed to be the one they claimed to have "spoken" to them in the first place.

In which case, all cynicism and denial has to go out the window. Either that, or be written off as "coincidence," which is of course the standard get-out for anybody who cannot accept any other explanation.

The Spirits Spread

Word travels fast in a rural community, and soon, the entire neighborhood

knew of the haunted house in Hydesville. Knew of it, and was intent upon experiencing the haunting for themselves. Nightly, a procession of visitors saw the girls forced to continue the charade, rapping, tapping and banging out the answers that a succession of strangers demanded to hear. And the more people who believed in them, the more difficult it became for the girls to stop.

The church became involved, the Methodist Episcopal of which the Fox family had been members for so long. They were asked to leave the congregation. The girls had engaged in unholy acts, said the preacher, and their parents were accountable, for it was they whose example the girls had followed.

A local attorney, E. E. Lewis of the nearby village of Canandaigua, visited, questioning everybody connected with the family. He traced the farmhouse's former tenants, interviewed neighbors and cynics alike, discussed the legend of the murdered peddler and, late in May 1848, he published the pamphlet *A Report of the Mysterious Noises Heard in the House of John D. Fox, in Hydesville, Arcadia, Wayne County*.

Up to this point, the Hydesville haunting had remained a local curiosity, a private affair. Now, it exploded, and it did so through perhaps the most unexpected auspices of all.

Maggie and Katy's eldest sister, thirty-three-year-old Leah, had long ago left Hydesville for a new life in Rochester, marrying and divorcing and forging fresh friendships around herself. She had not heard a word about the hauntings until now, and she was astonished to discover her own family at their epicenter.

She immediately set out for Hydesville, but her journey was not motivated only by concern for her family.

Rather, Leah had recently read another book, the mystic Andrew Jackson Davis's *The Divine Principles of Nature*—itself expounding for an American readership the teachings of the Swedish theologian Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772) and his belief that the living and the dead lived side by side, with our world simply one plane within a vaster spiritual universe.

Already a known trance speaker and clairvoyant healer, a proponent of mesmerism and much more, Davis was now convinced that it was a mere matter of time before whatever barrier it was that prevented free and easy communication between the two should be lowered. Reading Lewis's

pamphlet, Leah Fox believed that that time was now.

Neither was Davis preaching to the wilderness. In the seventy years since independence, America had grown rapidly . . . too rapidly for some. Death rates soared as poverty, disease and lethal working conditions followed in the footsteps of rampant capitalism and unchecked industrialization.

Early in the 1800s, the average American child had little more than a fifty-fifty chance of living into adulthood, while society of the era would have looked with absolute scorn upon the terror with which the modern US resident regards the periodic incursions of fatal disease into our society—the bird flu panic of the late 1990s, the SARS outbreak in 2003, the H5N1 plague of a few years after that, the Ebola scare of 2014.

Imagine living not with the vague, newspaper-borne threat of an infection wafting through town *some*day, but with the near-absolute certainty that the vast majority of people you knew were odds-on to contract at least one, and possibly several of the following diseases: smallpox, tuberculosis, malaria, yellow fever, diphtheria or cholera. That half the children they bore would die in infancy. That, even if they did survive childhood, only the most fortuitous among them would live to middle age.

Realities like that really do put modern life into perspective, don't they?

And if disease didn't get you, there were plenty of other things that would. Modern technology had devised manifold manners in which to kill people just as suddenly. The concepts of "health and safety" were not even afforded the lip-service compliance with which they seem to be (dis)regarded today. They were effectively unheard of, and they certainly weren't paid attention to. From the man-mangling machinery that lurked in every factory, to the glowing vats of molten metal, liquid poison and choking goo that was a vital component in every industry, death—painful, messy and absolutely avoidable—was literally an occupational hazard.

It was to counter what people believed to be a burgeoning disregard for the sanctity of human life, particularly where the workplace and the drive for profit were concerned, that the United States was already undergoing a major religious revival.

The era known as the Second Great Awakening had dawned, with every day seeming to birth a different sect, a new promise, a fresh interpretation of the Holy Writ. Almost every one of which, it seemed, was preparing for an imminent Day of Judgment.

Leah Fox did not necessarily subscribe to those beliefs. But she understood how some people might. How they were willing to grasp *anything* if it promised (or even appeared to promise) to bring them solace, comfort, understanding.

In this light, in the face of these fears and needs, what could possibly be more comforting than the knowledge that death is not the end?

Leah was not so gullible as to believe that her little sisters were innocent of any mischief. Indeed, she seems to have realized from the outset that Maggie and Katy were wholly responsible for the phenomena they appeared to attract, while the girls were simply pleased to finally have a confidante.

They even tried to teach Leah how they created the sounds with which they held Hydesville spellbound, but without success. No, Leah would not become a medium. She would become the ringmaster. Days later, Leah returned to Rochester with Katy in tow . . . and shortly after, claimed that the ghost had come, too, and that it kicked up such a disturbance that she was actually forced to relocate to a new, secret dwelling-place, in order to escape its attentions.

Which didn't really make much sense, partly because Katy moved with her; partly because Maggie then came to Rochester as well; and partly because the family's new home was positioned bang next door to a cemetery!

No matter. It was time now for all hell to be let loose, a storm of rappings, knockings and bangings that made the Hydesville haunting seem positively low-key. Especially once Leah proclaimed herself the official interpreter of the messages that were hurtling into her household.

Maggie's memoir makes it clear that she and Katy had long since grown bored with the game; that, left to their own devices, they would have ceased rapping, banging and scaring their poor mother long before. That it was fear of exposure that kept them going in the first place, and fear of Leah that maintained the deception now. Just once did Maggie summon the courage to call a halt to the deception, refusing to rap for almost two weeks. But Leah wore her resistance down with threats, with promises, with every weapon at her disposal, and ultimately Maggie was convinced to continue.

For Leah was in her element. She had always struck people as an intelligent woman, wasted in her most frequent occupation of offering music lessons to the children of Rochester's wealthiest citizens. Even she, however, does not seem to have realized the true extent of the entrepreneurial cunning with

which she had been blessed.

It was not, after all, simply a matter of tricking people. It was a matter of making them *want* to be tricked, and to continue to be tricked even if the trickery was exposed.

Everything was stage-managed to the nth degree. Having famously fled her home to "escape the ghost," Leah settled on a new dwelling that could not help but excite further comment—and suggestibility. Again, let us remember where it was. It was *next door to a cemetery*, and there, Leah arranged the most grandiose séances, led by Maggie and Katy, but wholly choreographed by their big sister and designed to convince even the most levelheaded sitter that the Fox girls were "the real thing." Because, with every fresh subscriber to the cause, so another walking, talking advertisement for what was becoming an immensely profitable business was born.

The girls were good. Guests were researched beforehand, of course. Indeed, the Fox sisters' first "converts," a middle-aged abolitionist Quaker couple named Amy and Isaac Post, were already friends of Leah's. She knew about the children they had lost to disease; about the disappointments they had suffered and the ambitions that they nurtured. They never dreamed, however, that Leah might communicate this knowledge to "the spirits." Or that the spirits would then relay it back to them with such uncanny and all-consuming accuracy that nobody could doubt their veracity.

There were cynics, of course. No less than the church back in Hydesville, Rochester's clergy was united in its opposition to the girls and their wicked, sin-soaked abilities. Accusations that the sisters were deranged, insane, even evil, were hurled at them publicly, and sometimes even personally. The girls became resignedly familiar to being told they ought to be hanged or burned as witches when they walked down the street. They learned to dodge the occasional stone and ignore the catcalls and hissing. Because they also grew accustomed to being praised and adored, and almost venerated by the people to whom their talents brought so much comfort.

Your Public Awaits

In mid-November 1849, the Fox sisters staged their most spectacular event yet, hiring Rochester's vast Corinthian Hall for a public demonstration of their talents. Tickets, priced at twenty-five cents apiece, sold out far in

advance, and even as they awaited the show, the girls knew that this was also to be their sternest test ever.

In the past, staging séances at Leah's home, or at those of other believers, there might have been an occasional stray cynic come to mock, but the sheer power of the other attendees' conviction would swiftly quash their disbelief.

There would be no such safety net at Corinthian Hall. Indeed, it seemed likely that the disbelievers would be in the vast majority, with even the local newspaper appearing to suggest that a jolly evening of fun, and ultimate exposure, was in the offing.

Neither did the audience let the pressmen down, howling with glee as the "ghost" commenced its rapping, and boldly firing their joke and trick questions at the two teenage girls who sat on the stage. But they never proved that it *was* a trick. Indeed, even among the jokers and teasers, there appeared to be a growing sense that something they did not understand . . . something far beyond the realms of mortal contrivance . . . had been present in the auditorium that night. A sense that could only be exacerbated when a committee of Rochester's most learned men convened to study the sisters and their claims, and then reported back that nothing they had seen or heard suggested that any form of trickery was involved.

The girls were appearing across four nights at the Corinthian, November 14 through 17. From the audience's point of view, the first night was the most high-spirited; the second, at which the first of the investigative committees reported its findings (the sisters had been tested that morning), a little less so. The tests themselves were placed under the closest scrutiny, but they appear to have left nothing to chance. One investigation had even recruited an all-female subcommittee to inspect the girls' underclothing! The third evening, too, passed off with little of note.

The final night was the rowdiest and the most animated. Before the show even began, the authorities allegedly discovered a vat of warm tar and a bag of feathers being smuggled into the building, for the purpose of redecorating the Fox sisters.

Other audience members arrived with firecrackers and noisemakers, all of them intent upon disrupting the show and, in so doing, chasing away the real-life specters that suddenly seemed to be crowding in upon their dull, unimaginative sense of reality.

The girls were ready for them. Perhaps, as it was later whispered, they

really *had* recruited sympathetic audience members to smuggle in their own arsenal of special ghostly effects. Or maybe, as Leah insisted, the spirit world itself had had its full of mockery, disbelief and insult.

Either way, whatever happened that night, the show ended in chaos, both sides battling for sonic supremacy, and while angry men attempted to storm the stage, and the theater management pleaded for calm, the Rochester police whisked the Foxes and their friends the Posts to safety.

"Spiritualism" exploded. As word of the disturbances in Rochester spread, backed up by reports of all that had triggered them, the Fox sisters became a national talking point, and their talents became a national pastime. Again, the intelligentsia of the age . . . the serious newspapers, commentators, authors and orators . . . insisted that it was all poppycock. Why, if these spirits were so all-knowing and all-powerful, demanded the *New York Tribune*, did they not just come out and say what they needed to, instead of embarking on so much pantomime?

Why indeed?

Believing Fox News

The search for an answer could not hold back the tide. In June 1850, the Fox sisters arrived in New York City, feted as celebrities even before they started work. And when they did, there was no holding them back. The great showman P. T. Barnum booked them to appear at his American Museum, with tickets now pegged at a dollar apiece, and though Barnum himself claimed not to be taken in, others clearly were.

Author James Fenimore Cooper was present and watched in astonishment as the sisters not only succeeded in contacting the author's late sister Hannah, who died in a riding accident when James was just eleven, but were also able to describe the accident in such detail that nobody was left in any doubt that what they said was the truth. Certainly Cooper was convinced; he instantly became one of the Fox sisters' most vociferous cheerleaders.

Further demonstrations won further supporters, while the girls themselves earned their own coterie of personal admirers. Katy was still only thirteen, but Maggie was blooming into young womanhood, and Leah, stylish and smart, brought a whole new realm of respectability to the once harshly intended phrase "a divorcée in her mid-thirties." These so-called "Rochester

Rappers," declared the *New York Herald*, "were in every sense incapable of any intentional deception."

Journalists who had hitherto spoken out against the sisters repented their crimes and rescinded their harsh words. On the streets, cheap souvenirs allowed average New Yorkers to proclaim their love of the Rochester Rappers. Onstage, actress Mary Taylor popularized a new song, again titled "The Rochester Rappers."

Andrew Jackson Davis, the mystic philosopher whose writings had so impacted upon Leah, added his voice to the Foxes' supporters, essentially proclaiming them the heaven-sent embodiment of all that he had prophesied. Only the upcoming visit of Swedish singer Jenny Lind rivaled the Fox sisters for headlines that summer, and when the *Tribune* declared the ladies "the lions of New York," there were very few people who would doubt it.

But there were a lot who would take advantage. By now, the Fox sisters were by no means alone in staging séances and speaking with the dead; indeed, such parlor tricks had exercised their own share of the public imagination for centuries. All the sisters really did was take an already thriving cultural undercurrent and expose it to the brightest limelight. And now, to paraphrase King Louis XV, *après lui, le déluge*.

According to Boston spiritualist LaRoy Sunderland, "[in 1850] there was not one family known throughout the New England states where responses from the spirit world had been made to questions put by mortals." A year later, "a thousand mediums witnessed in every state."

Out of respect for the Fox sisters' own vision of Spiritualism, many of the mediums who stepped forth in their wake were adolescent girls, the popular thinking of the day being that their souls were still pure enough to allow unimpeded congress between spirit and mortal. In Boston, for example, Cora Scott was a beautiful teenage blonde.

But Leah Fox proved that it was not wholly a young woman's game, and others of her generation rushed forth, as well. Just a few years earlier, in 1848, poet Sarah Helen Whitman had sufficiently bewitched Edgar Allan Poe that they once planned marriage, only to break off their engagement just two days later and part forever. Poe died just six months later.

Their entire relationship had lasted no more than three months, but the entire nation now knew her as "Poe's Helen," and she responded with poetry that she wrote, she claimed, in a spirit-induced trance—with Poe himself

guiding her pen.

Neither was it wholly a woman's game. Photography, such a boon to Spiritualism, as we shall see, was still very much in its infancy now. But spirit *painters* proliferated, artists such as George Walcutt, whose portraits of the visiting dead were so uncanny that even strangers swore that they were looking at their own blood relatives.

Predating John Lennon's posthumous songsmithery by 130 years, spirit musicians inspired the unschooled living to suddenly become master composers. Christian ministers became spiritualist supporters. Politicians embraced Spiritualism and befriended its most influential proponents—among the Fox sisters' closest immediate allies could be numbered a former representative from South Carolina, General Waddy Thompson and Wisconsin Territory governor Nathaniel Tallmadge.

Magazines emerged, exploring the unseen worlds that were opening up around mankind—*The Spiritualist Messenger*, *The Spiritual Philosopher* and many more. By the end of the nineteenth century, it is estimated there were up to thirty spiritualist magazines in more or less regular production in the United States alone.

Scientists stepped forward, acknowledging that though their discipline could not prove Spiritualism was real, their hearts and intellect told them that it was.

How could anybody argue against the existence of ghosts now?

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The Ghostly Gazetteer: Rhode Island to Tennessee

Run from the Roars of the Raucous Nightwalkers

A fierce black dog has haunted Fort Wetherill State Park in **Jamestown, Rhode Island**, since at least the Revolutionary War.

A china-chucking ghost apparently keeps the cleaners busy at the Castle Hill Inn in **Newport, Rhode Island**.

The first Catholic church to be built on Rhode Island, St. Mary's in **West Warwick**, is haunted by Mary, the wife of the church's builder—fulfilling a bitter Protestant curse that whoever broke ground on the church would be doomed to live there forever.

Two girls who drowned in the waters here play forever at Colt State Park in **Bristol, Rhode Island**.

A woman in black haunts Room 302 at the Harborside Inn in **Block Island, Rhode Island**.

The General Nathanael Greene Homestead in **Coventry, Rhode Island**, appears to possess a haunted baby carriage.

In **Cranston, Rhode Island**, Sprague Mansion is haunted by its namesake, the mill owner William Sprague, who died in 1790 after swallowing a fish bone.

Former mayor Doyle is believed to be behind the hauntings that whisper through City Hall in **Providence, Rhode Island**.

The haunted world of J. R. Pepper.

© J. R. Pepper

Workers crippled and killed by machinery are the spirits that ensure the eighteenth-century Slater Mill in **Pawtucket, Rhode Island**, will never be at rest.

In **Memphis, Tennessee**, the National Ornamental Metal Museum saw service as a hospital during the Civil War and apparently has the ghosts to prove it.

The Civil War spy Sam Davis is the best-known former resident of the Sam Davis Home in **Smyrna, Tennessee**, but it is his brother Oscar who is believed to haunt the place.

The Grand Ole Opry in **Nashville, Tennessee**, is haunted by country singer Hank Williams.

A Lady in White walks the Rotherwood Mansion in **Kingsport, Tennessee**, searching for her dead lover.

The Loretta Lynn Ranch in **Humphreys, Tennessee**, still hosts a number of Civil War–era soldiers.

In **Atoka, Tennessee**, Bethel Cumberland Presbyterian Church Cemetery (Bethel Assembly of God) once separated both criminals and children from the "regular" dead, and so its ghosts are segregated, too, the children playing amid their own tiny stones, the criminals scheming and whispering in the woods, and the rest of the populace going about their spectral business everywhere else.

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Spirits Having Flown

Conan Doyle, Cameras and Codswallop

Once it was out of the box, there was no way Spiritualism was going to be caged again. Across the United States, spirit circles formed in every major city, and overseas, too. Spiritualism arrived in Europe and embedded itself there. The Fox sisters themselves faded from view—by 1852, Maggie was newly wed to the Arctic explorer Dr. Elisha Kane; Leah had taken her third husband, David Underwood; and Katy was traveling abroad. But their profession was in no danger of disappearing. In 1853, it was estimated that there were as many as thirty thousand mediums in America; the following year, there were a reported two million spiritualists in the country.

Spiritualism retained its enemies, including some in very high places, but its popularity continued spreading. Indeed, when the likes of Ralph Waldo Emerson and poet James Russell spoke out against Spiritualism, the only people they hurt were themselves—as spiritualists set about boycotting their writings.

A similar fate befell many preachers who chose to speak out against Spiritualism, *not* because congregations necessarily denied their holy men the right to make up their own minds on the subject, but because too many clergymen seemed to see the issue in strict black and white. Either you were a God-fearing Christian or you were a spiritualist. You could not, they said, be both, yet many of their congregation were, and with very good reason. So many of the messages received from "the beyond" spoke openly and adoringly of Heaven, of angels, of Christ and of God. Spiritualism did not oppose Christianity. To many people, it *confirmed* it. It was the priests, with their blinkered refusal to accept this, who were denying the truth.

This was among the points raised by Henry Raymond, the founding editor

of the *New York Times*, in an 1855 editorial that outlined his own theories as to why Spiritualism had succeeded. Because it appealed "to the marvelous in man," and did so on a level that was "wider, stronger and deeper than . . . any philosophical or socialistic theory." In the face of that, Raymond asked, was it any wonder that "in [just] five years, [Spiritualism] has spread like wildfire over this continent so that there is scarcely a village without its mediums and its miracles . . ."

If Spiritualism was a delusion, Raymond concluded, it was one that had "misled very many of the intelligent as well as the ignorant."

Still, there was sufficient unease over the possibility that Spiritualism *was* nothing but one giant confidence trick, perpetrated on a gullible population by a new breed of heartless charlatan, that there was a growing demand for the government to at least put people's minds at rest.

On April 17, 1854, Illinois senator General James Shields, and Massachusetts senator Charles Sumner presented a fifteen-thousand-signature petition requesting that the Senate establish a scientific commission to study Spiritualism. Ultimately it was tabled, but not necessarily through any disinclination to act. Rather, nobody in government could decide to which of several possible subcommittees the petition should be referred. Was it a matter for foreign relations experts? For the post office? For the military? Nobody knew, so nothing was done.

Inquiring and frequently hostile minds, nevertheless, continued demanding answers. Ever more exhaustive tests were concocted, ever more humiliating examinations were demanded. But for every spiritualist who was unmasked as a fraud, there was always another to take his or her place, and no amount of "evidence" could sway the popular belief in Spiritualism's reality.

Even the eventual revelation that the Fox sisters had merely been playing a trick on their mother, which almost accidentally (on their behalf, at least) became a trick played on the country as a whole, was papered over by those who would believe in their art.

Maggie Fox's memoir was published in 1888, with Spiritualism still as powerful and popular as it had ever been. To those who had always doubted her, her confession provided long overdue proof that they had been right to do so, all along. To those who had always believed in her, her words were a tragic manifestation of the chronic alcoholism into which both sisters had slipped later in life, and which would ultimately carry them both to the other

side, Katy in July 1892, Maggie in March 1893.

Besides, an open-minded belief in Spiritualism is in no way an unquestioning belief in spiritual*ists,* and that is the key component that its opponents do not seem to have grasped. Or, at least, that they rarely acknowledge in the course of their assaults on the subject.

The belief in ghosts, and in their ability to communicate with the living, as we have seen throughout this book, is as old as history, and older than that. Spiritualism, at its most basic level, is simply an attempt to create a science, and a set of formal rules, around a belief that has been a part of the human psyche since the dawn of time. And like any other science, it has its supporters and its opponents, its theories and its proofs, its facts and its fictions.

So, some supposed spiritualists are fakes. Is there any field of human endeavor that has not at some point attracted the attention of charlatans?

When the owner of Starvation Heights, Doctor Linda Hazzard, was fined $100 for practicing osteopathy without a license, did that mean every osteopath was likewise a cheat?

When the pop world of the early 1990s was united in condemning the singing group Milli Vanilli as lip-synching puppets who did not perform on the records that bore their name, did that automatically place every other musician in similar doubt?

When the political establishment of the mid-1970s was shaken by President Richard Nixon’s confession that he was a liar, did that mean every other politician was likewise to be distrusted? (Don’t answer that.)

And so on. As a society, we naturally rejoice when charlatanism is exposed, because it proves that society is working. But we then disprove that same proof when we use one example as a blanket condemnation for others that have *not* failed a similar test.

The corollary to that opinion, of course, is offered up by the sheer number of spiritualists, mediums, and other paranormal talents who *have* been revealed as fakes, and all the more so in those instances where the actual act of fakery was so transparent that one can only marvel at the gullibility of those people who did believe in it.

At the same time, however, we have to admire the fortitude of the people who continue to believe, in the face of so much skepticism.

The spiritualist community of Lily Dale in upstate New York was founded

in 1879, and has not faltered in its beliefs since then. Other smaller, but not necessarily lesser, micro-societies have been flung up elsewhere, and they too have often survived no matter how violently fate and circumstance have assailed their convictions.

For Spiritualism, both as a formal discipline and as a wider-ranging catch-all title for a vast repository of lore, belief and phenomena, has undergone any number of challenges that, were we considering any other philosophy, would probably have proved fatal.

Technology and the Terrifying

Every generation, it seems, conjures its own fresh notion of how the dead should communicate with the living. In the 1840s, it was by rapping. By the 1860s, it was photography. In the 1890s, recorded sound was first seen as a means of parting the veil between worlds; into the 1900s, and film was regarded as the final frontier. During the First World War, the spiritualist Pearl Curran invoked the powers of the Ouija board, a parlor game that was first marketed in 1890, and which claimed no occult involvement whatsoever.

The telephone, the radio, television . . . as the twentieth century rattled by, with every fresh decade seemingly turning up a new life-changing invention, so each of those inventions was seen as a way of altering both our understanding of, and our relationship with, death as well.

Some were beyond reproach, others were beneath contempt. But who is self-assured enough to determine which is which?

In 1909, the *Chicago News* reported on an old abandoned house, long believed to be haunted, which suddenly came to life with ghostly activity, in the form of a terrifying face that appeared at a window and glared malevolently out at whoever passed by.

Nor did it appear only to certain people, or to characters of a gullible disposition. *Everybody* saw it, nobody could deny it. Nobody, that is, aside from the owner of the property, whose investigations revealed not a ghost or ghoul, or anything of the sort. But “nothing more ghastly than a moving picture enthusiast . . . from a building across the street . . . amusing himself night after night by casting on the curtains of the haunted house a pale yellow reflection. . . .”

So, a fraud.

But what of this? In 1985, Britain's *Mail on Sunday* newspaper reported on what was surely the world's first computer-ghost interaction, in the form of Thomas Harden, a four-century-old former dean of Brasenose College, Oxford, haunting the BBC Micro owned by an economics teacher residing in a small village in the county of Cheshire.

According to the report, Harden "calls the gadget a 'leems boyste'—light box—or a 'scrit devis' in the late Middle English of his time," and employed it to fire off a series of questions about modern times, demands that would appear on the monitor screen whether the computer was in use or not.

And thirty years later, with texting now as much a part of daily life as turning around to actually speak to the person sitting next to you, the television show *Nurse Jackie* introduced the concept of continuing to text a deceased loved one, just for the feeling of "staying in touch."

Which is great, and probably is very comforting, until the phone company reassigns the now-deactivated account's number to another user. In late 2014, an English woman who had been happily texting her dead grandmother for three years was shocked to one day receive a reply, saying simply "I'm watching over you."

Granny's number had indeed been given to another user, who in turn thought that the strange texts he was receiving from someone who appeared to believe he was dead must have been sent by a friend as a joke. As one would. When he discovered the truth behind the mysterious messages, he was probably as surprised as the recipient of his reply was.

But imagine if the pair had never discovered what had occurred. If he went through life wondering who was still sending him these cryptic messages; and if she went on believing that she really was in contact with the other side. A whole new ghost story would have been born, and probably a whole new industry, too. At least until it was finally pooh-poohed.

In a similar vein, we might view the modern fascination with "orbs," and the belief that they represent the spirits of the departed, returning as drifting balls of glowing energy. Quickly, that notion was laid to rest by the utterly prosaic realization that they are simply specks of dust illuminated by the digital cameras with which they are most commonly captured.

But not everybody in Chicago believed that every sighting of the ghost was the work of the movie fan, and not every orb-loving student of the paranormal is honor bound to accept the dull explanation that they are being

force-fed. Indeed, the presence of orbs has become an integral addition to any litany of reasons why a specific place should be considered haunted, and again, just because *most* orbs are the atmospheric equivalent of Ebenezer Scrooge's undigested blots of mustard, does that mean that they *all* are?

Probably. Of all the manifold manifestations to which the spirit world has allegedly resorted down the centuries since the very first ghost was seen, even the most open-minded believer must wonder why so many disembodied souls would select a form that would not even be visible to the viewer (and then only those who happened to be snapping away with a digital camera) until the early 1990s. How many millions . . . literally millions . . . of prior hauntings went completely unnoticed, how many vital messages went unheard, how many headless horsemen galloped past unseen, all because the ghost in question woke up one night and thought "right, I'm going to manifest myself as an orb"?

If the editor of the *New York Tribune* thought rapping was an ineffective means of communication in the 1840s, one can only imagine how he would have responded to orbs.

Yet orbs are also the descendants of what was once one of the spiritualist world's most effective arguments *for* the existence of life after death, and still one of its most intriguing.

Spirit Photography

Photography was still a newborn art when a Boston photographer named William H. Mumler, examining what we might regard as the world's first-ever "selfie" in the early 1860s, noticed a second figure in the photograph alongside him, despite having been thoroughly alone when the picture was taken. Even more astonishingly, closer study revealed his mysterious companion to be his own cousin, who had been dead for a dozen years at that time. "Few people understood photography back then," explains photographer J. R. Pepper.

> It was still a relatively new part of life. Unless they were actually photographers, or the chemists who mixed the chemicals, the general public had little to no understanding of how it worked, let alone how a photograph could be different from actual life.

There was new technology all around that people could not readily explain. So, why would the idea of "spirit photography" be anything different?

This was also a time when death and disease were regular occurrences. This was the time around the American Civil War and thousands of families had suffered inconceivable losses.

Mumler already had an interest in Spiritualism. Now he had a career in it as well. Moving to New York City, he established himself as America's first spirit photographer—not quite guaranteeing that every picture he took of somebody would feature a bonus spectral sitter, but allowing it to be suggested regardless, and rarely letting his clients down.

In 1869, Mumler famously photographed Mary Todd Lincoln, widow of the assassinated president—but claimed not to have known her true identity until he developed the plate and there, standing behind her with one hand on her shoulder, was the unmistakable form of Abe himself. However, J. R. Pepper cautions, "Reports say that she did enter the studio under an assumed name of 'Mrs. Lindall' in an attempt to remain anonymous. But Mumler was also known to coax information out of people as they sat for portraits. It would have been easy to figure out the basics with just a few questions. Her dark 'mourning' wardrobe would have indicated whether or not she had recently lost a family member and how close she was to said family member. It has also been said that she arrived wearing a typical mourning veil. His wife and assistant also started most sessions with some light conversation.

"Mrs. Lincoln, although not nearly as well known visually as her late husband, would have also have been been photographed by the press at some point throughout her life for various news articles and publicity. Although Mary Todd Lincoln had tried to venture into the studio anonymously, it would not have been impossible to figure out who she was." And to doctor the ensuing photograph accordingly. If Mumler's supposition was wrong, then old Abe was simply putting in an appearance for his own reasons. But if it was correct . . .

Moses A. Dow, editor of the then-popular *Waverley Magazine*, sat for Mumler, and was photographed with his late assistant, Mabel Warren, close by. A young medium from Bridgewater, Massachusetts, a Master Herrod, was photographed surrounded by what Mumler declared to be the spirits of

Europe, Asia and Africa. A Boston medium, Fanny Conant, was astonished to see herself seated alongside her deceased brother Chas.

Louis Magnus Melander was another of the manifold spirit photographers roaming the American psyche in the late nineteenth century.

Melander & Bro./Library of Congress

Mumler was particularly successful with the widows of soldiers lost to the American Civil War, which of course was in full blood when Mumler's career was at its height. One cannot even begin to calculate how many still-grieving women returned home at least partially comforted by the photograph they clutched, in which their uniformed lost loved one stood faint but instantly recognizable in the background.

It was utter nonsense, of course, as Mumler's 1869 fraud trial seems to have proved. J. R. Pepper, whose work today replicates many of Mumler's (and his contemporaries') tricks, explains, "There were a variety of different methods. In some cases it was through double exposure, [which] would be something done in the dark room behind closed doors.

"The ghost was created in a variety of different ways. In some cases, [it] was a cutout from another photo that had been added in later. In other

instances, a ghostly figure or mannequin had been brought in while the subject of the portrait was being photographed. The exposure would have been pretty long, so if the ghostly figure was only in the frame for a few seconds, it would seem see-through, while the seated subject would appear solid. In either case, the subject would not see the results until after the fact."

Mumler was, perhaps surprisingly, ultimately declared innocent, but still it was indisputable that several of the supposed ghosts in his pictures had been recognized by others as genuine living people, photographed surreptitiously by Mumler and then double-exposed onto the "official" pictures. Other "ghosts" were caught in poses that were suspiciously identical to other, existing, pictures.

Suggestions were made that Mumler even took down the addresses of clients not only so he could notify them when their photographs were ready, but also so he could break into their homes and borrow existing pictures of late relatives.

Mumler's career was ruined. Even with the not-guilty verdict apparently clearing his name, the publicity surrounding the case was crippling. But spirit photography lived on and, in so doing, it gathered some remarkable supporters. Including, to the wonder of all who have read the Sherlock Holmes series of detective stories, the British author Arthur Conan Doyle, one of the most successful, respected and highly paid writers of his age.

The Ghost and Sherlock Holmes

Sherlock Holmes was no stranger to the occult, even if his cunning old creator did eventually indicate that even the most mysterious circumstance ultimately had a ready, earthy explanation. Time and again, Holmes would be faced by mysteries that could surely be resolved only through acknowledging some supernatural agency or other, and time and again, the great detective found that single improbable coincidence that proved a mundane explanation after all.

Even *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, a creation so terrifying that one Bostonian reader, a certain Marcus J. Long, was driven to suicide by the suspense (or so claimed the *Spokane Press* in 1909), turned out to be just a hound in the end. If any man alive could see through the deceptive shrouds and shadows of Spiritualism, surely it was Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

Instead . . .

It was in 1916, at the height of the Great War, that Conan Doyle first declared his “conversion” to Spiritualism, his faith buttressed by a refusal to accept that the thousands of lives being snuffed out on the fields of France and Belgium were simply ended there and then. There had to be a greater purpose to life than to become cannon fodder before one had even started living.

He was not the only person to feel this way. Over the past few decades, the popularity of Spiritualism had declined on both sides of the Atlantic. But just as the American Civil War had produced a major upsurge of believers (as the aforementioned Mr. Mumler had discovered to his delight), so the Great War was to have a similar effect, first in Europe but, following the United States’s entry into the conflict in 1917, across the ocean, too.

The majority of believers were, of course, those people who had already lost a loved one to the fighting. But Conan Doyle realized that those people required leadership, too; that their beliefs should be formed and schooled. In 1918, with his Holmesian writing behind him (at least for the moment), the great man published the first in what would become a flood of spiritualist books.

The New Revelation; or, What Is Spiritualism? documented Conan Doyle’s conversion.

“When the War came, it brought earnestness into all our souls and made us look closely at our own beliefs and reassess their values. In the presence of an agonized world, hearing everyday of the deaths of the flower of our race in the first promise of their unfulfilled youth . . . I seemed suddenly to see that this subject with which I had so long dallied was not merely a study of a force outside the rules of science, but that it really was tremendous, a breaking down of the walls between the two worlds, a direct undeniable message from beyond, a call of hope and guidance to the human race at the time of its deepest affliction.

“The objective side of it ceased to interest. . . . The religious side . . . was clearly of greater importance.”

The book was poorly received both by readers and critics, but Conan Doyle was not discouraged. Of the thirty books that he would write, edit or translate over the next twelve years, fully two-thirds of them pertained to Spiritualism.

Like *The New Revelation*, they were not best sellers. Indeed, with few

exceptions they sold so poorly that no mainstream publisher would even consider them. Instead, Conan Doyle was reduced to publishing, or at least reprinting, the books under his own Psychic Press imprint, financing them with the moneys earned from his other, more conventional writings. At one point, he was even forced to break his resolution to lay Holmes to rest, and pen one further series of stories, in order to keep his spiritualist writings in print.

And for My Next Best Seller . . .

Two fields in particular fascinated Conan Doyle.

The first was posthumous authorship, the notion that the death of a writer should not preclude his continuing to publish fresh works. Indeed, one chapter of what became his own final book, 1930's *The Edge of the Unknown*, was given over to an impassioned defense of the recent emergence of new writings by such long-dead authors as Oscar Wilde and Jack London, while Conan Doyle also delighted in telling of his encounter with Charles Dickens—dead since 1870, but apparently a long-standing fan of Conan Doyle's.

Addressing a meeting in September 1927, Conan Doyle described a séance at his country house when the planchette spelled out the word *BOZ*—a pseudonym that Dickens employed through many of his earliest journalistic strivings. Neither was that their sole encounter. According to a report published in the *Daily Star* newspaper in 1930, "in a later exchange about [Dickens's] unfinished novel *Edwin Drood*, Sir Arthur said that the spirit of Dickens had told him, 'The poor chap had a hard time. I always hoped you would put Sherlock on his track. I don't know which is better—to solve the mystery in your notebook or let it remain a mystery.'"

How fitting, then, that within a year of Conan Doyle's own demise, a new book bearing his name should appear, a spiritual manifesto titled *Thy Kingdom Come*, dictated (it was said) to a medium hired by a brotherhood of adepts living in a Himalayan retreat!

Conan Doyle's other fascination was spirit photography. Even before the publication of his first book on the spiritualist theme, he was sounding forth on this particular subject, apparently being introduced to it by an article in the *Sunday Times* newspaper, on February 20, 1916.

“A strange story is told concerning the funeral of a Grenadier Guardsman named Jonathan Owen in the mining village of Risea, Monmouthshire. The soldier came home wounded from France and died recently at Harrogate. He was buried in the cemetery of his native village in the same grave as his little daughter who had just predeceased him. After the funeral, the relatives thought they would like a photograph of the grave, which was abundantly embowered in foliage and flowers. Then an amazing thing happened. When the plate was developed the photograph revealed the faces of Owen and his little girl looking out from the foliage. They are both, it is stated, plainly visible and the resemblance is convincing. This mystifying incident has created great excitement throughout the district and is being investigated by spiritualists and those interested in psychical research.”

According to author Peter Haining, the doyen of British supernatural writers and researchers, among those who studied the photograph was Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who baldly declared, “I myself investigated this matter and have found the facts to be as stated.”

An appendix within Conan Doyle’s second spiritualist volume, *The Vital Message*, would speak further of his fascination with spirit photography, beginning with his confession that he was merely following in the footsteps of “two of the bravest champions whom Spiritualism has ever produced, the late W. T. Stead and the late Archdeacon Colley . . .”—both of whom “attached great importance to spirit photography as a final and incontestable proof of survival.”

He admitted that there was scope for deception, reminding his readers of the disgraced French spirit photographer Edouard Buguet. At one time the Parisian was regarded among the most gifted mediums in all of Europe, and with good reason. J. R. Pepper continues, “I have a soft spot for William Mumler, but my favorite artistically is Buguet. His work is so much more theatrical. Mumler’s [photographs] really look like a double exposure in some cases. Also, his ‘ghosts’ were always fully clothed.

“Now, the obvious reason for this is because he took a print from somewhere else. Another reason was because Spiritualists believed the afterlife was an extension of their current one; the spirits would be as they were in life, hence the formal clothes. Buguet, however, went for a much more ethereal approach.” Suspicion fell slowly but firmly over the photography, until in 1875 the gendarmerie launched a raid on his studio.

They uncovered two shrouded dummies and no fewer than 299 photographs of heads mounted onto cardboard. Even Buguet's most loyal supporters found it difficult to explain those away, and Conan Doyle did not even try. Instead, he balanced Buguet's dishonesty with evidence of what he insisted was a genuine example of the art.

"The circumstances were very remarkable," he wrote. A mother and father, hoping to obtain a spirit photograph of their late son, visited the best known of all such photographers, a former carpenter named William Hope, and sat for him.

Sadly, the visit "was unproductive and their plate a blank save for their own presentment. Returning disappointed to London, they managed, through the mediumship of Mrs. Leonard, to get into touch with their boy, and asked him why they had failed.

"He replied that the conditions had been bad, but that he had actually succeeded some days later in getting onto the plate of [another sitter] Lady Glenconnor, who had been to Crewe upon a similar errand. The parents communicated with this lady, who replied saying that she had found the image of a stranger upon her plate. On receiving a print they at once recognized their son, and could even see that, as a proof of identity, he had reproduced the bullet wound on his left temple.

"The opinion of a miniature painter who had done a picture of the young soldier is worth recording as evidence of identity. The artist says: 'After painting the miniature of your son Will, I feel I know every turn of his face, and am quite convinced of the likeness of the psychic photograph. All the modeling of the brow, nose and eyes is marked by illness—especially is the mouth slightly contracted—but this does not interfere with the real form. The way the hair grows on the brow and temple is noticeably like the photograph taken before he was wounded.'"

Convincing stuff. Indeed, with testimonials such as this to back them up, it is scarcely to be wondered that spirit photographers proliferated at this time, amateur cameramen from all walks of life racing to capture their own spooky images on film. Neither was Conan Doyle at all shy about encouraging them. In 1922, he was approached by editor Fred Darlow to contribute to a new book on the subject, *The Case for Spirit Photography*.

He agreed, not only for a love of the subject, he said, but also so that he might defend the latest spirit photographer to be brought to some kind of

cultural justice by those who would belittle their art . . . none other than William Hope.

The Strange Case of William Hope

William Hope had been producing spirit photographs for a long time by then. Born in 1863, and trained as a carpenter, Hope's first spirit photograph was published in 1905, and in the years since then, Hope had amazed (and, it was now being alleged, duped) some of the most levelheaded people in the country.

Certainly the Society for Psychical Research, led by the indomitable paranormal investigator Harry Price, had no qualms about exposing him as a fraud, with Price declaring, "William Hope has been found guilty of deliberately substituting his own plates for those of a sitter. . . . It implies that the medium brings to the sitting a duplicate slide and faked plates for fraudulent purposes."

Conan Doyle was not impressed by Price's condemnation. William Hope, he insisted, remained above reproach; he was an unselfish man whose only wish was to turn his inexplicable gifts to the service of others. He charged only for the cost of his materials (which, naturally, were more expensive than those that a "conventional" photographer might require), and in return, he brought hope and happiness to all who consulted him. Harry Price, on the other hand, was nothing more than a base skeptic, the very premise of whose work, under "controlled laboratory conditions," was frequently as fraudulent as he claimed his victims to be.

Like so many frauds before him, there was no way that Hope's reputation could survive his unmasking; no way that he could explain how the photographs he produced for Price's investigation utilized plates that patently were not the secretly marked ones with which he had been provided. Conan Doyle did his best to shed doubt on Price's findings, even leading a mass exodus from the Society for Psychical Research, as eighty-four members resigned to protest the organization's anti-spiritualist stance.

In fact, the vogue for spirit photography faded as quickly as it had arisen. Even as Conan Doyle continued to vouchsafe its veracity, the art was finally dispatched to the grave by the unmasking of its greatest practitioner, a woman named Ada Emma Deane.

The Ultimate Psychic Own Goal

Mrs. Deane's fame rested on her ability to photograph the dead soldiers whose ghosts supposedly gathered around the Cenotaph, the massive stone war monument that had recently been raised in London's Whitehall, on Armistice Day (November 11—the American Veterans Day) every year.

Harry Price was very keen to arrange a controlled sitting with this redoubtable talent, particularly after noting she had been a lowly charwoman before she discovered her talent, but "Mrs. Deane refused to allow me to experiment with her."

Instead, it was left to the editors of the London newspaper *The Daily Sketch* to unravel the mystery of Deane's photography.

In November 1924, some newspapermen were studying one of Deane's photographs when one of them noticed something very familiar about one of the wraiths she had captured looking so pensive in the air surrounding the Cenotaph. The photograph was enlarged, and suddenly the entire picture became clear. The familiar face was that of a famous soccer player! So was the one beside it; so were another and another. Within a matter of days, and for a full week thereafter, *The Daily Sketch* was ruthlessly exposing the wretched woman's trickery, and the public's taste for her trade was finally exhausted.

Conan Doyle, on the other hand, continued to support her long after members of even his own persuasion began doubting her credentials.

Spirit photography still survives today; may, in fact, even be more popular than it ever was, as cell phones and the like have utterly democratized the once exclusive ability to instantly record a sighting. Or, for that matter, take a photograph of anything. Back in the 1920s, however, people were less patient with the eccentricities of their celebrities. Conan Doyle's loyalty to Deane, to Hope, and to a growing succession of other apparent frauds certainly damaged his once pristine reputation.

Fairies at the Bottom of the Garden

When two schoolgirls produced what they claimed to be a series of photographs showing fairies dancing and playing at the foot of their garden, in the picturesque village of Cottingley, Conan Doyle was among the very

first to acclaim the pictures as genuine evidence that the little folk existed—and that they did indeed look precisely like the fairies that one could cut out of any child's picture book. Even as the evidence mounted against the girls, and academia poured scorn upon anybody who even looked like they believed in the Cottingley Fairies, Conan Doyle not only remained a fervent believer, he even dedicated a book to the topic.

The very first words of *The Coming of the Fairies* (1922) admit that "the series of incidents set forth in this little volume represent either the most elaborate and ingenious hoax ever played on the public, or else they constitute an event in human history which may in the future appear to have been epoch-making in its character." Read on, however, and Conan Doyle left no doubt as to which side of the equation he leaned.

Nor the reasons why.

Although Conan Doyle was not exactly an old man by now, still being in his mid-sixties, nevertheless the suggestion that his once keen intellect was becoming dulled, and even muddled, by his years was very easy to make. Harry Price, speaking to a lecture audience, raised many a smile by reporting how Conan Doyle had recently traveled to New York City, where he visited the famed American psychics William R. Thompson and his wife, Eva, a "materializing medium," blessed with "a sensitive nature attuned to the finer harmonies of our etherealized dead."

Ghosts were not the only unearthly creatures whom the camera apparently captured—as the popularity

of the Cottingley Fairies proved in 1920s England. This infamous 1917 photo (featuring Frances Griffiths, and taken by her cousin Elsie Wright) was hailed by the great but credulous Arthur Conan Doyle as proof that fairies were real.

Glenn Hill/SSPL/Getty Images

Price himself had already dismissed the duo as nothing more than "a rather entertaining vaudeville act," but such a condemnation would carry no weight with Conan Doyle. Indeed, barely had the author settled in New York than the Thompsons were arranging a séance for their illustrious visitor. And of course arranging for a very special guest to appear, Conan Doyle's recently departed mother, Mary.

It was a glorious display, and a profoundly moving one. Indeed, Conan Doyle was allegedly reduced to tears, copiously shed while he embraced the so comfortingly maternal figure. "The chance to touch my mother's hand, and feel the substance there, the chance to see her force, was very precious to me," he wrote.

Just three days later, the Thompsons were unmasked as fakes. A pair of undercover New York City policemen, responding to a growing number of complaints about the Thompsons' claims, attended one of their séances, passing themselves off as regular customers.

Like so many dupes before them, they sat through the interminable hymns that William Thompson habitually led the audience through; and waited, too, through the protracted period of silence and darkness to which the gathering would then be subjected. Then, at the very moment that the first supposedly spectral form emerged from the cabinet to which all eyes were directed, the doughty lawmen leaped up, wrestled it to the ground, and revealed it to be Eva in heavy disguise.

The game was up.

Conan Doyle himself would later claim that he had not been fooled for a moment by the Thompsons' pretense. He had felt muscular, masculine shoulders beneath the figure's outline, he said, and he had detected the means by which voices were projected, too. "I trust that the American spiritualists will not condone or try to cover up such scandals," he chastised. "The rotten twigs must come off."

However, as Harry Price rather gleefully pointed out, it took Conan Doyle some time to arrive at these conclusions. Time that investigators on both

sides of the ocean blithely spent unmasking any number of other frauds. The escapologist Harry Houdini was especially active in this field, and Conan Doyle (with whom Houdini was close friends) later credited him with teaching him much about detecting further such poppycock.

But he also scolded Houdini, warning him not to make the same mistake as other investigators so frequently did, by muddying the waters in which we all —shaman and charlatan, investigator and investigat*ed*—by necessity must stand.

"Can people not understand," Conan Doyle asked in a letter to Houdini, "that 'psychic' means 'of the spirit,' and that it concerns not only the invisible spirit or the spirit of the medium, but equally those of every one of the investigators? A delicate balance and harmonious atmosphere are needed."

Nothing, he continued, was better guaranteed to "make spirit approach impossible" than "an atmosphere which is antagonistic. Thus, a certain class of researcher always ruins his result before he begins."

In other words, a single disbeliever in a house of genuine spirits could give the impression that all is a fraud; that only if everyone harmoniously accepts all they see to be real will the reality of what they are seeing become clear. A magnificent Catch-22, in other words, and a conundrum that itself was worthy of Sherlock Holmes.

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The Ghostly Gazetteer: Texas to Vermont

Spiteful Spirits and Sickening Stenches

Staff at the old Jefferson Davis Hospital in **Houston, Texas**, reported seeing nurses wearing century-old outfits busying themselves around the wards. The hospital itself was built over a cemetery that contained casualties of both the Civil War and a deadly yellow fever outbreak. Out on Patterson Road Bridge, meanwhile, more long-dead Civil War soldiers camp out in the open, and will tap on the doors and windows of any car that should park there at night.

The second floor of the Excelsior House in **Jefferson, Texas**, is the domain of a headless spirit.

Spectral nuns still walk the La Posada Hotel in **Laredo, Texas**, seemingly unaware that it was long ago converted from a convent. The very streets of Laredo, meanwhile, are as psychically active as the old folk song suggests they ought to be. Drums bang slowly, fifes play lowly, and the death march can always be heard.

A student driven to suicide by an especially spooky Ouija session haunts Stephen F. Austin State University in **Nacogdoches, Texas**.

A headless nun walks the Christus Santa Rosa Hospital in **San Antonio, Texas**. Elsewhere in that same city, the splendidly named Alamodrome is haunted by a workman who was killed during its construction. And then there's the Alamo itself, which is littered with specters and sightings.

Lake Brownwood, in **Brownwood, Texas**'s Flatrock Park, is haunted by the spirit of a swimmer who drowned while this was still Pecan Bayou, long before the park itself was laid out.

Now abandoned, the old Worley Hospital in **Pampa, Texas**, is haunted by mysterious screams. Although, as it used to be a hospital, maybe the screams are not so mysterious, after all.

A mysterious woman in black stands motionless in the old opera house in **Colorado City, Texas**; and elsewhere in town, close by the public pool, there waits a teenager in a white robe, with black hair and deep staring eyes.

A bride-to-be who hanged herself after learning that she'd been jilted haunts the nineteenth floor of the Adolphus Hotel in **Dallas, Texas**.

Settlers slaughtered by an alleged Mormon militia cry out at the Mountain Meadows Massacre Site in **Veyo, Utah.**

The founder of the Mormon religion, Brigham Young, still keeps the company of his nineteenth wife, Ann Eliza Webb, around Old Deseret, a **Salt Lake City, Utah**, settlement that dates back to 1844.

The Bagley Train Disaster in 1944 left the greatest psychic mark on the old Union Station in **Ogden, Utah**.

Warriors are said to still fight at Cove Fort Historic Site in **Beaver, Utah**.

A rock climber killed in an accident in the 1970s is among the mountaineering spirits known to populate Rock Canyon in **Provo, Utah**.

In **Tooele, Utah**, the old County Poor House is a maze of shadows, shapes and shades.

The Old Stagecoach Inn in **Waterbury, Vermont**, has a housekeeping ghost who strips beds and folds linen.

Nocturnal visitors to Lake Bomoseen in **Fair Haven, Vermont**, should look out for the phantom rowboat that races across the water, and the three young

men who disappeared while undertaking a similar journey many years ago.

A partially dissected woman is the grisly ghost who walks the former medical academy at Castleton State College in **Castleton, Vermont**. The building is now used as a chapel.

A spectral hiker warns modern walkers to turn back, part of the way up Glastenbury Mountain, part of the Green Mountain National Forest in **Bennington County, Vermont**.

In **St. Albans, Vermont**, the Old Barlowe Street School was renowned for being haunted by a janitor who suffered a fatal heart attack in the girls' restroom in the 1920s. No doubt cueing a plethora of off-color and ribald commentary.

All along the Connecticut River, in both Vermont and New Hampshire, the ghosts of old-time loggers . . . with their spectral logs . . . have been seen making their way toward the **Hartland Rapids**.

A nurse named Mary haunts the former TB clinic that is now the Vermont Police Academy in **Pittsford, Vermont**. According to legend, she herself contracted the disease and ended her days a patient in her own former workplace.

A phantom pirate ship sails **St. Albans Bay, Vermont**.

An old-time naval captain named Jacobs is among the ghosts who walk the University of Vermont at **Burlington, Vermont**.

Eerie happenings reported at Jennings Hall in **Bennington, Vermont**, were the real life inspiration behind novelist Shirley Jackson's 1959 thriller *The Haunting of Hill House.*

Ghostly soldiers march up the very aptly named Tunic Road in **Shaftsbury, Vermont**.

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Torrid Tales and Plangent Poetry

The Ghost on Page and Screen

With the ghost story having established itself firmly, and very early on, among the human race's most popular diversions, it should be no surprise that it has retained that lofty status ever since. At no point in the history of the written word has the allure of the supernatural waned, and with first, the advent of printing, and second, the rise of near-universal reading (at least in the industrialized West), so the sway of ghost stories became ever more entrenched.

Of course changing fashions have affected both their popularity and their publication—like any literary field, the ghost story has had its moments of ascendancy, and its occasional dips. Although it is worth noting that when traditional ghost stories do fall from favor, it is usually because some other branch of the supernatural has replaced it, be it vampires, zombies, warlocks or whatever.

Otherwise, ghosts permeate the literature of the English language.

Within the three hundred–strong corpus of historic ballads that were collected, in both the United Kingdom and the United States, by Harvard professor Francis Child towards the end of the nineteenth century, the saga of "King Henry" (Child 32) tells of a monarch who was seduced into first feeding, then entertaining, and finally making love to "a grisly ghost."

Henry is fortunate. The following morning, he awakens to discover that the hideous creature with which he had cavorted has been transformed into "the fairest maid he ever did see"—his willingness to give her "all [her] will" being sufficient to lift the disfiguring curse that had hitherto afflicted her. A happy ending in both the traditional, and the modern, X-rated, meaning of the phrase, and one that effortlessly made the voyage across the Atlantic in the

luggage of some early émigré. Indeed, “King Henry” is just one of several songs that firmly establish the colonial American’s relationship with the supernatural in general, and ghosts in particular—a body of work that also illustrates the method by which the old traditions even came to survive in the new world.

“In my opinion,” folk historian Alan Lomax wrote in *Folk Songs of North America* in 1960, “these old, bloody ballads . . . were not merely survivals from a body of lore handed on indiscriminately . . . but a selection from that lore for fantasies, wishes, and norms of behavior which corresponded (with considerable precision, I believe) to the emotional needs of pioneer women in America.” For it was among the women, all scholars agree, that the ballads and stories, these mighty epics of longing and desire, blazed the brightest.

Many are straightforward declarations of the greatest love of all—one that endures even beyond death. In “The Suffolk Miracle” (Child 272), which might well be the earliest recorded retelling of the tale of the vanishing hitchhiker, a young girl is forbidden by her father to see again her lover, and sent into exile. But when she returns home years later, who is the first person she should see? Her lover, of course, come to collect on horseback.

Riding home, the man announces he has a headache. She ties her handkerchief around his head, and when they get back to her house, she sends him off to have a good night’s sleep. At which point her father comes out and, in the course of catching her up on all the local news, announces that her old lover is dead.

Of course she doesn’t believe him. How could he be? He just delivered her home. He has her handkerchief!

So her father arranges for the corpse to be exhumed. And there, wrapped around the skeleton’s head, is the very handkerchief she wrapped there just a few hours before.

Similar triumphs of love over life are behind “The Knight’s Tale” (Child 265), in which a drowned lord returns from the deep to assure his wife he has no objection to her remarrying once she has completed her mourning; and in “Sweet William’s Ghost” (Child 77), telling of a young man who appears before his lover, Margaret, to ask that he be released from his promise to marry her, because he is dead.

But do not fool yourself into thinking that even the ghostliest ballads were all sentimental twaddle. Lomax continued, “The men, left to themselves, sang

humorous or bawdy songs, or composed songs about work or deeds of violence.” But the traditional ballads were scarcely wilting violets.

Starring the eternally delightful Margaret O’Brien (here with Robert Young and Charles Laughton), *The Canterville Ghost* (1944) lent cinematic substance to one of Oscar Wilde’s most ethereal tales.

Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer/Photofest

“The Twa Sisters” (Child 10), a ballad whose roots have been traced back to Viking Scandinavia, tells of a girl who, not content with murdering her prettier sister, then contrives a musical instrument, a kind of harp, from the dead girl’s bones and hair. To seal her triumph, the murderess then won the heart of her dead sibling’s lover and arranged for the harp to be played at their wedding feast. What she did not expect was for the harp to take on the sister’s voice and sing to all of how she came to die.

“The Twa Sisters” ends with the murderess being tortured and finally executed. (Or, in one version, being exiled overseas, where she is ultimately devoured by cannibals.) In truth, however, the fate of the killer is immaterial. It is the tenacity of the murdered girl’s spirit, and a desire for justice that is more powerful even than death, that places the ballad so high in the annals of early American tradition.

But other ballads speak of compacts with hell, the interference of the fairy folk, ghastly murder, and spectral retribution—or otherwise. “Lady Gay” (Child 79) tells of a mother who is so opposed to her son’s marriage that she

transforms herself into a vicious sow and hideously mangles her own grandchild; and in “Willie’s Lady” (Child 6), another mother does not even allow matters to go that far. The moment her hated daughter-in-law becomes pregnant, she curses her never to deliver the child, but to remain pregnant until it kills her.

Equally cruel is “Barbara Allen” (Child 84), in which a proud beauty so callously dismisses a suitor’s offer of marriage that he literally dies for love. At which point, in some versions of the ballad, Barbara Allen is so overcome by remorse that she, too, expires. But, in others, she lives on, careless of the suffering she engendered—a spokeswoman, if not an especially practical role model, for all the women whose own desires were beaten down by the societal mores of the age.

Into the Victorian era, and the nascent drive toward female suffrage allied very early on with the similarly newborn spiritualist movement for much the same reason—it placed women, universally regarded as the most suitable conduit for ghostly communications, in charge. One reason, we could teasingly suggest, why some of the most enjoyable, and most emotionally coruscating ghost (and ghost-like) stories ever written were the work of female writers—from Mrs. Radcliffe’s *Gaston de Blondeville* (published posthumously, in 1826), *Wuthering Heights* (1847) by Emily Brontë and *Jane Eyre* (also 1847) by her sister Charlotte; on to Daphne DuMaurier’s *Jamaica Inn* (1936) and *Rebecca* (1937); Shirley Jackson’s *The Haunting of Hill House* (1959); and *Her Fearful Symmetry* by Audrey Nifenegger (2009).

Ghosts can be seen as a force for societal change, then, at least so far as their cultural deployment is concerned. But they are also simply a fascinating subject, and one that has never lost that fascination. They are as rife in the writings of Charles Dickens, coming up to two hundred years ago, as they are in the pages of *Harry Potter*. In the eighteenth century, ghosts were present at the birth of Gothic literature. Into the nineteenth, and they beguiled Hardy, Heathcliff and Harrison Ainsworth—with the latter, by virtue of forty years spent at the forefront of English popular fiction, as responsible as any man for furthering the reach of those spectral fingers.

The ensuing delivery of, we might say, “ghosts for ghosts’ sake,” was not a popular fashion among the critics, no matter how successful it was in the marketplace. No less a master of the macabre than Edgar Allan Poe, reviewing one of Ainsworth’s more vivacious conflations of history, legend

and the supernatural, 1840's *Guy Fawkes*, brutally opined, "To say a word about [this volume] in the way of serious criticism would be to prove ourselves as great a blockhead as its author.

"*Macte virtute*, dear sir, proceed and flourish. In the meantime, we bid you a final farewell. Your next volume, which will have some such appellation as *The Ghost of Cock Lane*, we shall take the liberty of throwing unopened out of the window. Our pigs are not all of the description called 'Learned,' but they will have more leisure for its perusal than we."

Such condemnations were, of course, nothing less than arrant snobbery, and Poe acknowledged as much (albeit inadvertently) when he described Ainsworth's target audience as "the lowest order of the lettered mob." In the 1840s, and just as much as in the 2010s, the distinction between "serious literature" and mass-market potboilers was alive and well, and the only consolation that today's panderers can take is that Ainsworth was not the only contemporary author of his own age to be habitually tarred with that particular brush. Charles Dickens, too, was generally regarded as little more than a shameless populist, a role in which he positively reveled, and to which he encouraged others to flock.

The Saga of the Seas

It is absolutely inexplicable, not to mention utterly unforgivable, that there are people reading this . . . indeed, that there are even people alive today, who consider themselves to be well-read . . . who have never heard of William Hope Hodgson.

His obscurity could be put down to the fact that he died so young, just forty years of age when he was killed by an artillery shell during the Battle of Ypres in April 1918. By that time he had already published a number of short stories, together with two full-length novels and a series of tales recounting the adventures of Thomas Carnacki, a brilliantly delineated detective of the occult whose adventures one can imagine having a profound influence on the career of the real-life Harry Price.

H. P. Lovecraft, himself no slouch in the world of supernatural authorship, was an unrepentant fan. "But for a few touches of commonplace sentimentality," he wrote, Hodgson's "*The House on the Borderline* would be a classic of the first water." A status that it still retains today. Readers of the

American magazine *Adventure* likewise treasured his regular contributions to the pulp, and any examination of his entire oeuvre would find Hodgson not only exploring the occult and supernatural fields, but venturing too into the still-infant lands of science fiction.

His greatest works, however, were his tales of the sea, and among them, the spectral terrors that walk the waves were an especial favorite.

Of course he was by no means the first author to take a sailor's life as the model for a ghost story. Mariners are by reputation among the most superstitious souls ever to ply such a singular trade, and even before the first novelists turned their attention toward the traditions of the sea, the annals of shipboard traditions and beliefs had long since been written down.

Captain Frederick Marryat's *The Phantom Ship*, an 1839 revision of the legend of the Flying Dutchman (see chapter nineteen), is as fine a place as any to begin an armchair exploration of the terrors of the tides; particularly if one follows through with the same author's earlier (1837) *Snarleyyow the Dog Fiend*, the tale of an especially ill-tempered sea captain and the demonic hound that accompanied him on his voyages.

Marryat, however, was fascinated by the big picture and grand gestures. He wrote his tales of derring-do for an audience that demanded its sailors swash buckle, with the cannon's roar in their ears and a full wind in the sails.

Hodgson's sea tales are the opposite. They take place in darkness, in solitude, in fearful, lost corners of worlds that only loosely cling to reality. Himself a former seaman, he drew upon his own experiences in furnishing the background to his tales, and then reached into the fears that he shared with his fellow mariners as flesh for the original bones.

He was an avid self-publicist, never shying away from performing tricks and stunts both onstage and off, and entered the lore of Harry Houdini, during the escapologist's visit to England in 1902. An escapologist in his own right, Hodgson was employed to affix the restraints to the American during a performance in the northern town of Blackburn. And considering the nature of Houdini's act, it seems peculiar to learn that he complained, loudly and bitterly, that Hodgson put the manacles on too tightly.

Having already established himself as author of a series of physical fitness articles, Hodgson's first published fiction, in 1904, was *The Goddess of Death*, in which a stolen statue of the Indian goddess Kali stalks and slaughters the inhabitants of an Indian village. It was chilling enough,

although scarcely likely to recommend its author as much more than a competent storyteller with a fair grasp of the macabre.

That changed with the arrival in 1906 of the first part of *From the Tideless Sea*—originally published, like much of Hodgson's work, in the United States. A ship, the *Homebird*, finds itself trapped in the Sargasso Sea, that vast swamp of tangled marine vegetation that stretches for thousands of miles across the central Atlantic, and which was once among the most fearful hazards any sailor could encounter.

Particularly once Hodgson began populating it with the horrors of his own mind.

Much the same basic background attends Hodgson's first novel, *The Boats of the "Glen-Carrig,"* and he would return to similar mysteries on many subsequent occasions. But traditional ghosts, too, haunted his seascapes, be they the vengeful spirits of ferocious buccaneers (Hodgson's next novel was the baldly titled but brilliantly told *The Ghost Pirates*) or merely drowned seamen; while the six short stories that made up the career of the ghost hunter Carnacki likewise draw upon the most primeval fears that the human mind is prey to—*The Whistling Room . . . The House Among the Laurels . . . The Thing Invisible . . . The Searcher of the End House . . .* and *The Horse of the Invisible*, a story whose debt to Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Hound of the Baskervilles* might be pronounced, but which takes that tale's own suggestions so much further than Sherlock Holmes would ever have dared.

Neither did Carnacki perish alongside his creator. In 2007, just short of the centenary of the detective's debut appearance, he was reborn among the characters of *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*, the wildly sprawling, somewhat steampunkish, and supremely popular comic book creation of author Alan Moore.

The Great War snuffed out many lives—twenty million, according to some estimates, and all for what turned out to be very little of worthwhile consequence. A few new lines on the map, a few new political grudges and nationalist resentments, a few fresh roots for Europe's next major conflict to flower from. To describe any of those lost lives as being any more important, or significant, than the others would be the height of hyperbolic inanity.

But still the death of William Hope Hodgson, just six months before the conflict ended, robbed English letters of a talent that was still in its first flush of genius—and robbed posterity of a name that should be as familiar to the

modern reader as any other on the “classics” shelf.

Maybe you should ask for his collected works when it’s time for your next birthday?

When a paranormal investigator invites two women (Claire Bloom and Julie Harris) to take part in an experiment in a haunted house . . . you’ll have to watch *The Haunting* (1963) for further details.

MGM/Photofest

A Christmas Ghost Story

If William Hope Hodgson’s place on the supernatural bookshelf is considered, even by his fans, to be obscure at best, Charles Dickens’s remains unbreakable. Even illiterates have heard of Dickens, and even pagans and atheists adore his *A Christmas Carol*, that most deathless trope of the festive season.

Yet *A Christmas Carol* was merely one of the many supernatural tales that he penned, and which maintained his bank balance in as healthy a state as he might have wished. *The Chimes*, “The Hanged Man’s Bride,” *The Haunted Man*. Dickens did not invent the tradition of telling ghost stories around the fire at Christmas, but he certainly encouraged its growth. Plus, he also wrote “The Signalman,” a short story that is today regarded among the most

effective ghost stories ever conceived.

Originally published in 1866, in the Christmas edition of Dickens's own magazine *All the Year Round*, "The Signalman" is told in the words of, indeed, a railroad signalman, charged with ensuring the safety of the locomotives that pass along his stretch of the track.

He is haunted, however, by a spirit that speaks out only to warn him of imminent disasters, but with no suggestion as to how the disaster might be averted. And so it takes place, before the horrified gaze of the signalman—a dreadful collision between two trains in the nearby tunnel. The tragic death of a young woman on board a passing train. And finally, a chilling premonition of the signalman's own death.

"The Signalman" was wildly popular at the time, and its reputation has only expanded over the years, with its chilling notoriety blossoming even further following its adaptation, in 1976, for a BBC television "Ghost Story for Christmas"—a broadcast, by the way, that many in the UK still consider the single most effective ghost story in the history of the medium.

Long before that, however, the Signalman had been working his eerie magic on his audience. Having first been adapted for radio in 1937, as part of CBS's *Columbia Workshop* series of thirty-minute plays, the story returned in 1945 as "The Thing in the Tunnel," an episode within the syndicated series *The Weird Circle*, itself one of the most fondly remembered supernatural/fantasy radio shows of the war years (the series ran for seventy-eight episodes between 1943 and 1945).

It was, by modern sensibilities, a magnificently melodramatic program. Even the opening narration seems to step out of another world: "In this cave by the restless sea, we are met to call from out of the past stories strange and weird. Bellkeeper, toll the bell, so that all may know we are gathered again in the Weird Circle."

But delve into any of the aforementioned seventy-eight episodes, from the opening night's recounting of "The Fall of the House of Usher," through such thrilling chillers as "A Terribly Strange Bed," "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," "The Specter of Tappington" and so many more, and on to the final show, "The Black Parchment," and the entire history of American supernatural radio, several glorious dynasties of delicious chillers, will spool out before your ears. *Lights Out*. *Suspense*. *Ghost Hour*, the 1920s NBC series that probably started the entire family line, and that certainly ignited

the phenomenon of sharing “true life” experiences, via host Joseph Dunninger’s weekly broadcast of unspoken mental images to his listeners—who were then expected to write in to tell him what they sensed.

Again, modern sensibilities will doubtless be less than titillated by the ensuing excitement—a reminder that, like our comprehension of ghosts, our expectations of the paranormal have shifted radically over the years. Matters that would have intrigued, or even terrified, an audience in the 1930s would scarcely cause a raised eyebrow today, as any modern listener to Orson Welles’s 1938 adaptation of *The War of the Worlds* will tell you.

Broadcast then, it caused mass panic on the streets, with listeners genuinely believing that New Jersey was under attack from death-dealing Martians. Replayed today . . . well, it’s infinitely superior to the Tom Cruise movie version of the same tale, but that is scarcely saying anything. Modern sensibilities are simply too sophisticated to be fooled by such shenanigans today.

Or at least, we say that, and we like to believe it. But the annals of British broadcasting history still bear the scars of Halloween night, 1992, and the broadcast of the mockumentary *Ghostwatch*.

Ghostwatch

Set in a purportedly haunted, but otherwise excruciatingly normal-looking house, the show took the form of a live broadcast, investigating the presence of a spirit whom the children in the house had nicknamed Pipes—because that is what their mother blamed, when first the sounds of the haunting were heard.

The television team dug deeper and discovered the spirit was most likely to be that of a certain Raymond Tunstall, a former resident of the house who himself had been driven to the edge of madness by what he believed to be the ghost of an even older local resident, a nineteenth-century baby farmer named Mother Seddons.

With their cameras set up around the house, recording every movement in the rooms most affected by the spirit, the television crew are first astonished and then terrified as Pipes’s manifestations grow more and more pronounced. Shadowy figures, spectral voices, flying objects, with every passing moment, the activity increases until Pipes achieves his full power, apparently

slaughtering one of the TV presenters, before taking possession of the BBC itself and broadcasting his own mad poltergeist energies to the entire country.

It was a fabulous piece of fiction. And people went crazy. While many viewers telephoned the BBC to complain that the show was simply way too terrifying to have ever been broadcast without some kind of pre-credits warning, others insisted that they themselves had been affected either by Pipes or the poltergeists that he unleashed.

They genuinely believed it to have been true. The deployment, through the show, of real-life television personalities as the hosts of the broadcast convinced people that they had genuinely witnessed the death of Sarah Green; and the possession of Michael Parkinson; and, not only that, but that they were next.

By the following morning, the entire country was in uproar—at least if you judge by the tabloid newspaper headlines that screamed their own condemnation of the so-called sick stunt. At least one suicide was blamed on the program, an eighteen-year-old factory worker hearing the pipes bang in his own home and convincing himself that Pipes was on the prowl. Two other viewers, ten-year-old boys, were reportedly diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder as a direct consequence of watching the program, the first time that this diagnosis was ever blamed upon a television show.

Other people just claimed to have been frightened out of their skin.

The BBC, stunned by the response, immediately placed a ten-year ban on *Ghostwatch* ever being broadcast again, and a decade after that, it remains unrepeated, at least in the UK. It has been released on DVD, though, and it was broadcast on the Canadian Scream network in 2004, ensuring that this televisual masterpiece . . . arguably the most significant, and certainly the most effective piece of supernatural television of the past quarter century . . . is neither lost nor forgotten.

Even among subsequent productions that could arguably claim to have had a similar effect, both the makers of the movie *Blair Witch Project* and a subsequent television hoax, illusionist Derren Brown's *Séance*, have acknowledged the influence of *Ghostwatch* on their own work. One could also point a camera at the show's most basic premise—the investigation of a very normal house on a very normal street—as a prophetic forebear of the reality paranormal television that would explode to prominence over the next few years.

Ghostwatch, of course, was a one-off. Its intentions demanded that. It was a ghost story and it was intended to scare its viewers. (Although probably not as much as it did.) But ghosts in general are no more strangers to television than they were to radio.

Ghost Vision

Not for nothing is the television known, in some cultures, as "the haunted fish tank." As far back as the 1950s and 1960s, it was a more than appropriate title. From the horror-filled households of *The Munsters*, *The Addams Family* and *Dark Shadows*, wherein every shape and shade of ghoul was deployed in a parody of mundane suburbia; through the delights of the imported *My Partner, The Ghost* (UK title *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)*), ghosts have led comedy, drama, thriller and soap.

Age is no barrier to appreciating the ghostly. Both looking and behaving exactly as you'd expect him to, Casper the Friendly Ghost emerged from a 1939 children's book to become one of the hit cartoons of the forties and beyond; a comic book beginning in the early 1950s; and even a movie in 1995.

Following its debut in fall 1969, the 1970s were the preserve of *Scooby Doo, Where Are You*, about a gang of self-consciously meddling kids and the talking, *yikes*-ing Great Dane hound who gave the show its name . . . nothing supernatural there, but Shaggy, Fred, Daphne, and Velma, and Scooby Doo of course, did have a remarkable penchant for embroiling themselves in some oddly supernatural-shaped mysteries.

Best of all, though, was *The Ghosts of Motley Hall*, a British creation that took the age-old belief that the country's stately homes are all haunted, and peopled one such pile with no fewer than five ghosts, every one adhering to the most glorious archetypes of a real-life haunting—the medieval jester, the Georgian dandy, the Victorian soldier, the common stable lad and, best of all, the mysterious White Lady, the oldest of the Hall's inhabitants, and the most forgetful, too. She's been at the haunting game for so long that she's forgotten her name, or even how she died.

So that's the kids sorted out for the night. Now, how about the grown-ups?

There's a lot. There's been a lot recently, and a lot in the past, too. We will pass over the *Scooby Doo* XXX parody (although fans of the original will

find most of their dreams, and a few of their suspicions, coming gloriously to fruition as the movie rolls on). Instead, bunker in with the box set of *Ghost Whisperer*, Jennifer Love Hewitt's long-running (five seasons, 2005–2010) series of psychic investigations.

Jennifer Love Hewitt (here with Aisha Tyler)—prime time's own *Ghost Whisperer*, in an episode from 2005.

CBS/Photofest

With *Being Human*, a semi-soap devoted to the apartment-sharing mishaps of a ghost, a vampire and a werewolf. And *Supernatural*, which at least dropped a few ghosts into its weekly potpourri of all-purpose bogies.

With *Asylum*, a BBC America series set in a converted mental institution . . . converted, that is, into apartments! Each one apparently equipped with its own resident spectral psychopath. For those nights when the waste disposal gets clogged.

With *Hex*, perhaps the greatest supernatural show of the twenty-first century so far . . . although its makers (the BBC again) clearly disagree, because they cancelled it in mid-story arc. Set in an exclusive boarding school and piling fiend onto fright onto fiend once again as it ran through its all-too-short two-season life, *Hex* started as it meant to go on, by killing off one of the major characters in the very first episode, and then having her return as a ghost.

From there, the show explodes into a cavalcade of voodoo curses, avenging angels, devious Nephilim, alchemist's daughters, beastly babies and so much

more. But through it all, the ghost—Thelma—remains a stable element aboard a whirlwind of ideas, and that is exactly how it should be. For if you cannot rely upon a ghost to hold the house together, whom can you trust?

Television as a whole has its old faithfuls and regular stand-bys, the princes of past penmanship whose work is always ripe for another retelling. Jane Austen, Mark Twain, Washington Irving and, in the realms of the supernatural, M. R. James, an English medievalist and scholar who also happened to produce some of the most atmospherically creepy stories of the early twentieth century, have regularly adapted themselves to the medium.

From 1968 (but readily available on DVD), a British production of *Whistle and I'll Come to You* succeeded not only in making the story absolutely believable, but cast the very landscape . . . England's easternmost coastline . . . into an equally foreboding role. From the first half of the 1970s, *The Stalls of Barchester* (1971), *A Warning to the Curious* (1972), *The Treasure of Abbot Thomas* (1974), *The Ash Tree* (1975)—and, smack in the middle of that chilling sequence, *Lost Hearts* (1973), the indeed heart-stopping tale of an old man who believes he can preserve his life forever, if he just enacts the correct ritual with the freshly carved heart of a child. Whose house is now haunted by the victims of his initial experiments.

One of them plays a hurdy-gurdy. You will never hear that instrument in the same way again.

Enough with the terror.

Adapted from the movie of the same name, the gentle spectral romance of *The Ghost and Mrs. Muir* proved one of the sitcom successes of the late 1960s; and although nobody admits to having actually enjoyed it, a lot of mid-1960s viewers nevertheless still recall every moment of *My Mother the Car*, a glorious slab of "what were they thinking" absurdity, in which a deceased parent is reincarnated as a garrulous 1928 Porter touring car. And when we turn away from the small screen, the big screen is just as active.

Some of the greatest modern ghost stories of them all were originally written for the cinema, or adapted from novels and tales that are so cinematic that they *could* have been. *Poltergeist*, *The Shining* and *The Amityville Horror* are on any such list of course. But there is also . . .

Interviewed by the *Fortean Times* in 2014, actress Linda Blair shot down some of Hollywood's favorite tales of haunted moviemaking when she admitted she experienced nothing—and that despite, as a child, living in a

home that the entire family believed was haunted by a cousin, Timmy, who died in a car accident when he was sixteen, a couple of years before Blair's birth.

"My sister was the one who actually used to see him the most. I talked to my family about it, and they said: 'Yeah, we see Timmy all the time.' They said he appeared outside, coming toward the window in what I suppose you would call a ghostly form. I never saw him myself."

The *Exorcist* set, too, was peaceful. "I was told when I was young that children can sense things, but I never did. I never felt anything was weird on the film shoot. . . . It is true that they had priests come in and bless the set, but I wasn't there."

So, *The Exorcist* was not the scare-fest that legend likes to think it should have been . . . or is that just its terrified audience hitting back at a movie that scared it so dreadfully, by seeking reassurance that the cast and crew were just as frightened themselves?

Onscreen scares have never been in short supply, though.

The Ghost Breaker is a 1922 Wallace Reid silent film that is often described as one of the classics of the age. Sadly, descriptions are all we have to go on, as the movie itself is long lost. In other words . . . it's a ghost!

An absolutely charming adaptation of Oscar Wilde's *The Canterville Ghost* (1944), with Charles Laughton as the ghost, and the pugnaciously precocious Margaret O'Brien as his castle's twentieth-century owner, the six-year-old Lady Jessica de Canterville.

The Uninvited, in 1944, Ray Milland and Ruth Hussey discovering why the beautiful Gothic-style home they just purchased was placed on the market so cheaply.

Ray Milland and Ruth Hussey chilled movie houses across America with 1944's *The Uninvited*.
Paramount Pictures/Photofest

The Ghost and Mrs. Muir—the utterly captivating 1947 tearjerker that inspired the TV series twenty years on, Gene Tierney as the recently widowed beauty who moves to a seaside town; Rex Harrison as the recently deceased sea captain who haunts the house she moves into.

Deborah Kerr's reinvention of *The Turn of the Screw*, 1961's truly nightmare-inducing *The Innocents*.

The Haunting (1963), in which a paranormal investigator takes over a haunted mansion, to discover that there are certain things that his science cannot control.

The Legend of Hell House (1973). Another investigator, another notoriously haunted house, and the pen of Richard Matheson ensuring that nobody gets out unscathed.

Phantom of the Paradise—Brian DePalma's 1974 retweaking of *The Phantom of the Opera*, with a rock 'n' roll setting and a stellar performance for the previously unknown Jessica Harper.

Ghost Story was taken, in 1981, from the Peter Straub novel of the same name, a series of flashbacks and fearful misfortunes that starred one of the most distinguished casts of Hollywood veterans ever assembled on a single set—Fred Astaire, Douglas Fairbanks Jr., Melvyn Douglas and John Houseman.

Any one of several adaptations of *A Christmas Carol*, but most potently the 1984 rendition, with George C. Scott resplendent as the greatest Scrooge ever to stalk the screen. And from that same year, *Ghostbusters*, the story of a paranormal investigation team that sets up in an old New York City firehouse and claims it can rid every home of its unwanted pests.

Which goes really well for them, right up until the demon gets to work. (As a fascinating aside, writer and costar Dan Aykroyd is the great-grandson of Toronto, Canada's leading spiritualist enthusiasts, Samuel Augustus Aykroyd, and the son of his biographer, Peter H. Aykroyd.)

Who you gonna call? Why, Harold Ramis, Ernie Hudson, Bill Murray and Dan Aykroyd in *Ghostbusters* (1984), of course.

Columbia Pictures/Photofest

The Sixth Sense (1999), starring Bruce Willis, directed by M. Night Shyamalan, and home to that most deathless of modern movie quotations, "I see dead people."

The Others, from 2001; Nicole Kidman and children living out an endless nightmare in a secluded house staffed by the strangest servants—the same movie, incidentally, that ignited the twenty-first-century fascination with one of the Victorian era's quaintest obsessions, of taking sweetly-posed photographs of the recently deceased.

Ghost Ship—a truly spectacular 2002 gore-fest, Julianna Margulies and Gabriel Byrne among the luckless maritime salvage team who stumble upon the drifting hulk of a passenger ship that went missing forty years earlier.

The Orphanage, a Spanish movie from 2007, in which a young mother returns to her childhood home, itself a former home for handicapped orphans, and learns that not all of the former inmates have departed. And, from the same year, *Paranormal Activity*, an apparently low-budget American production in which *Blair Witch*–style "found footage" documents the nightmare awaiting homeowners Katie and Micah when they try to settle in a haunted house. It isn't a *great* film (although it's better than its sequels), and there are probably a lot of better ways to get your spooky kicks on movie night. But, as the founding father of it own vault full of imitators, if you're going to watch one, it might as well be the originator.

Just don't expect the poltergeists to want to share the popcorn.

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The Ghostly Gazetteer: Virginias to Wyoming

Terminating Our Travels, Tired but Triumphant

When a Confederate soldier learned that his wife had been unfaithful with a Union man, he hastened to the foyer of what is now the Lafayette Inn in **Standardsville, Virginia**, and shot himself. His ghost still walks the inn, and his blood can never be cleaned from the floor.

The Wayside Inn in **Middletown, Virginia**, is reportedly the oldest still-operating tavern in America. Room Fourteen is the haunted one.

In **Petersburg, Virginia**, the Central Lunatic Asylum was the first in America to accept African Americans patients, even in the days of slavery. Just so long as their owners could afford their treatment. Several of these poor souls are said still to be here.

Thomas Jefferson's former home at Monticello, in **Charlottesville, Virginia**, is naturally still his favorite earthly retreat. Fellow ex-presidents Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis, meanwhile, are said to favor Fort Monroe in **Hampton, Virginia**.

Laurel Grove Cemetery, in **Norton, Virginia**, is haunted by shadowy figures and frigid temperatures.

The Lyric Theater in **Blacksburg, Virginia**, is another that is haunted by a workman killed in its construction.

Colonel Fielding Lewis, the husband of George Washington's sister Betty, is the celebrity spook at the Kenmore Plantation in **Fredericksburg, Virginia**.

The Lancaster Tavern in **Lancaster, Virginia**, is said to be haunted by the smell of cooking bacon.

The **Amelia Wildlife Management Area** in Virginia is a wildlife reserve with a difference. It is very haunted. Once said to be a favorite dumping ground for murder victims, it was also the scene of a terrible fire, from which emerged the areas most celebrated and graphically named ghost, the Charred Lady.

A classic 1920s beauty walks the mezzanine of the Davenport Hotel and Tower in **Spokane, Washington**.

A part of historic Fort Vancouver in **Vancouver, Washington**, Officer's Row is said to boast several military-style ghosts.

Ragged children run through the Maltby Cemetery in **Woodinville, Washington**.

A former speakeasy, the old Skykomish Hotel in **Kent, Washington**, was haunted by a Blue Lady, a former prostitute it was believed.

The McMillin Mausoleum in the woods near **Friday Harbor, Washington**, contains a fully furnished dining room, where the spirits of the dead are said to meet and eat.

The cemetery in **Black Diamond, Washington**, is peopled today by a phantom white horse and the ghostly swinging lanterns and whistling of the coal miners who once lived and died around here.

Among several unnamed theatrical ghosts, and the theater's own founder, a Mr. Moore, the Moore Theater in **Seattle, Washington**, is also said to be haunted by the rock musician Kurt Cobain. He is also believed to hang out still at his old home overlooking Lake Washington, while another former downtown venue, the nightclub the Vogue, occupied the ground floor of a

First Avenue building that had once housed a brothel—whose own employees were apparently still hard at work on the upper floors.

Fort Lewis Military Museum at the **Joint Base Lewis-McChord** in Washington is haunted by a worker who was murdered during location filming of the 1927 movie *The Patent Leather Kid.*

Weston, West Virginia, boasts one of the best-known haunted asylums in America, the Weston State Hospital (aka Trans-Allegheny Lunatic Asylum)—star of every paranormal reality TV show that can get there.

In **Moundsville, West Virginia**, the old West Virginia State Penitentiary possesses all the supernatural fittings you would expect from what is widely regarded to have been one of the most violent prisons in America.

A murdered nineteenth-century sheriff haunts the Old Hampshire County Jail in **Romney, West Virginia**.

A maintenance man who suffered a fatal heart attack on the job is said to haunt the West Virginia State Capitol in **Charleston, West Virginia**.

Lovers Leap in the Hawks Nest State Park in **Ansted, West Virginia**, is well named—and haunted by some of the couples who took that name too literally.

The 1920s theater in **Huntington, West Virginia**, is allegedly haunted by a homeless man who froze to death inside by the building one bitter winter night.

A Confederate soldier is said to walk the Glen Ferris Inn in **Glen Ferris, West Virginia**, a playful soul whose stunts include frothing up the water in the birdbath and closing doors behind people.

Built on the site of what was once the town jail, the public library in **Kingwood, West Virginia**, has inherited the old lockup's quotient of ghosts.

A former manager's cigar smoke haunts the Apollo Theatre in **Martinsburg, West Virginia**. He has also been seen standing outside, still happily puffing

away.

Legend claims that thirty people died when the Moe Lutheran Church in **Clear Lake, Wisconsin**, burned to the ground in the 1900s, and that all thirty victims still haunt the place today.

Phantom babies scream through the night at Forest Hill Cemetery in **Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin**.

Adam Bobel, builder of the Boscobel Hotel in **Boscobel, Wisconsin**, still visits his best-known creation.

A ghostly priest walks St. Killian's Catholic Cemetery in **Lake Geneva, Wisconsin**.

The smiling ghost in big round glasses who has been seen around the Grand Opera House in **Oshkosh, Wisconsin**, is believed to be a former employee, a certain Percy Keene.

A woman who was killed by a drunk driver while she was jogging along Jay Road, in **Random Lake, Wisconsin**, is said still to run the road.

The Octagon House in **Fond du Lac, Wisconsin**, is haunted by a young boy.

Whenever storms hit the Michigan Island lighthouse in **La Pointe, Wisconsin**, the heavy metal front door slams shut twice. Just as it did that night long ago when a keeper was crushed to death when it suddenly closed on him.

A former janitor is said to still patrol the Capitol building in Cheyenne, Wyoming.

Photo by Dave Thompson

A stonemason fell to his death while working on the bell tower of St. Mark's church in **Cheyenne, Wyoming**. Needless to say, he still works there.

Cowboys attempting to tie the wild mustangs of **Casper, Wyoming**, used to find themselves facing a most fearsome foe, a ghostly white stallion who would bite, kick and chase them.

Old Faithful Inn, in **Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming**, is said to be haunted by a headless bride.

Ghostly cavalrymen ride through the **Francis E. Warren Air Force Base** in Wyoming.

Illuminated by a spectral lantern, an equally ghostly farmer named O'Rourke works Wyoming's **Salt Creek Oil Fields**.

Sweetwater County Courthouse in **Green River, Wyoming**, is haunted by a

tall figure who spends most of his time just wandering around, but who occasionally spills the coffee in the kitchens.

If you're ever visiting **Fort Laramie National Historic Site** in Wyoming, and someone tells you to be quiet, it's probably the ghostly cavalry officer known as Old Bedlam. He does that a lot, apparently. Nearby, the Platte River is haunted by a phantom ship.

The town of **Kane, Wyoming**, was drowned when the Yellowtail Reservoir was created. But when the water level is low, parts of the town can still be seen—including the old graveyard, where a woman in blue is sometimes glimpsed.

Footsteps, voices, cries and shapes are all glimpsed in and around the caves that pepper Cedar Mountain, in **Cody, Wyoming**, within which so many people have become lost . . . sometimes forever.

Epilogue:
Do You Believe in Ghosts . . . Yet?

The New York Sun could not get enough of the story. It was not yet evening on April 9, 1891, and already the street outside the Bleecker Street Ghost House had drawn "as large a 'house' . . . as Barnum's Circus or any of the theaters. There was a bigger crowd about 'Cohnfeld's Folly' than there was three weeks ago when the flames gutted the buildings from Mercer to Greene Streets and did damage away up in the millions.

"The wraith was not due till midnight, but the street was packed with watchers as early as nine o'clock. The crowd was so dense that pedestrians with difficulty forced their way through it and twice a squad of blue-coats descended on the mob and routed it. Five minutes after the police had retired the street was as impassable as before."

The site was already a spectacular one. The aforementioned fire had torn through the mean dwellings and stores that once lined the street, leaving just a single great wall that teetered and swayed alarmingly every time the wind blew. At some point, all the neighbors were convinced, a good gust was going to send the whole thing crashing to the ground, and who knew what further damage it would cause. Particularly now that it was such a tourist attraction.

Sensible witnesses claimed that the "ghost" was originally simply a sheet of tin, left to hang from the top of the wall once the fire had destroyed the rest of the roof. As the *Sun* explained, "Only one side of it is attached to the brickwork, and when there is any wind it trembles in the breeze and rattles with an uncertain sound."

But then the first eyewitness came forward, "an old Frenchman living in the vicinity, however, who avers that three nights ago he saw with his own eyes a lady in white standing out against the darkened sky on the very summit of the

tottering wall. Her long, flowing robes fluttered in the breeze, and even while he watched there came a low, wailing sound, and the wraith dissolved into air.

"He kept his eye fixed on the spot for a full minute, but the vision did not reappear, and as he turned to walk away he thought he heard groaning as of a lost spirit. The sound, he says, made his blood run cold and kept him shivering the whole night through."

First a ghost, then an explanation as to why there should be a ghost. Nobody perished in the fire. But many years before, "a wealthy old gentleman of foreign birth" had turned up one day with a beautiful young lady in tow, "little more than a child in appearance, [with] the soft eyes, olive complexion and lithe, graceful figure of a Spaniard." Just once did the neighbors see her, the day she arrived at the house, accompanying the old man home from a trip abroad. Never again, however, was she seen until a few days after the old man, too, disappeared.

"There was an investigation," said the *Sun*, "and in a hole dug in the cellar was found the body of the beautiful young girl. There were no marks on her body, and it was supposed she had been smothered. The ghost, if ghost there is, is undoubtedly the spirit of this unfortunate and nameless young woman."

Did the ghost appear that night, to assuage the appetite of that waiting crowd? Maybe. A few newspaper reporters were adamant that nothing remotely newsworthy happened. But others in the crowd claimed they witnessed something, and when a bored little boy threw a brick at the wall, doubtless hoping to encourage the ghost to show up, there were some bystanders who thought that *that* was the ghost.

Which shows how much they know.

A Friend of a Friend Said . . .

By now the reader will probably have a very good idea indeed about the circumstances in which a good haunting can come about; and, possibly, a somewhat jaundiced notion of how easy it is for a supposedly genuine haunting to manifest itself from a mistaken, spurious or even utterly fictional impression.

The thin line between urban legend and true experience is one that we are invited to cross every time we hear, or even relay, a story that begins "a

friend of a friend . . .”; while the old parlor game of Whisper Down the Lane (also known as Telephone, and in the United Kingdom as the faintly disreputable sounding “Chinese Whispers”) should remind us how easy it is for a single observation to become unrecognizably twisted into something else entirely, merely through the act of retelling.

How many family ghost traditions, told and retold over a period of decades, have become absolutely divorced from their original setting? The ease with which the gentle green bonneted lady who is said to have haunted the Myrtles Plantation in the 1950s has been transformed into a murderous, one-eared, green-turbaned slave girl is evidence enough of that process.

Neither is this the only instance of a hitherto benign spirit becoming something far more sinister—an event that often (but not always) coincides with a location’s equally abrupt transformation from, for example, a private dwelling into a hotel. Returning to the aforementioned joys of Peter O’Toole’s Castle Plunkett, and the 1980s movie *High Spirits*, tourists will forgive an awful lot of other indignities if you can only show them a ghost.

Even on those occasions when the ghost itself is impossible.

If you’re reading this book in sequence, Arthur Conan Doyle should still be fresh in your memory. Would it surprise you to learn that he is said to haunt several of the houses that he called home during his lifetime? Of course it wouldn’t. But what if you were then told that his most famous creation also walks the earth—that the ghost of Sherlock Holmes has been seen standing on the pavement of Baker Street, outside the 221B address that he made so famous worldwide, *and which never existed until tourism decided it ought to*.

Would you be so quick to believe that?

Cometh the Man, Cometh the Raven

Edgar Allan Poe, the master of the American macabre, has his favorite haunts as well. In Baltimore, a pub on the last street before the docks, The Horse You Came In On, is widely believed to be the establishment from whence he was headed home the night that he died. Naturally he haunts it.

In New York, his home at Poe Cottage, in the Bronx. In Newark, Delaware, the Dark Poet has supposedly been seen around another inn, the Deer Park Tavern on Main Street; in Richmond, Virginia; in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and in Baltimore again, where he haunts the graveyard in

which, initially, he was buried in an unmarked grave.

How did he die? Nobody knows. He was found hopelessly intoxicated and already near death on the street outside another tavern, Ryan's, and conveyed to the nearby Washington College Hospital, where he breathed his last. Those two places, too, can and do claim to have been paid posthumous visits by Poe.

But the legend that a ghostly crowd has been seen, kicking him to death, is but one of the myriad urban legends that grew up around the frankly unknown circumstances of his demise—most widely popularized by the 1967 Beatles song "I Am the Walrus," and the lyric "Man, you should have seen them kicking Edgar Allan Poe."

So, the ghost of a single line in a pop song. Which is joined, if we then dig into the supernatural arcana that surrounds Poe's writings, by alleged sightings of Arthur Gordon Pym, the hero of Poe's 1838 *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket*; of Lenore, the lost love whose memory so cripples the narrator of *The Raven*; of Roderick Usher; of a veritable host of characters that would never have even been dreamed of had Poe not lived to invent them. Fictional phantoms every last one of them, and if we were feeling especially ungenerous, we could say . . . well, if people are going to believe in them, then they'll believe in anything.

Which is true. But it is also false. Particularly if one adheres to the Stone Tape theory of hauntings—that is, that ghosts are unconscious "recordings" of past events or emotions, caused to replay by the convergence of certain conditions.

Artistic creation is, at least to some extent, an intensely emotional process, and the creation of a truly convincing character—be it Sherlock Holmes, Long John Silver, Winston Smith or the Artful Dodger—is not something that their authors ever shrugged off with a blasé "oh, *that*." As author and poet Chloe Mortenson puts it, "Many of the greatest influences of humanity have never drawn a breath or lived in physical form, but they have shaped humankind regardless."

Maybe the character itself, being wholly a work of the imagination, is not capable of becoming a ghost. But the process by which the character was created, and the dreams, schemes and ideas that went into that creation—could *they* linger and, when encountered by a fan, coalesce into a recognizable form?

The late John Keel, renowned UFOlogist and the author of *The Mothman Prophecies*, claimed that residents of the apartment building where Walter Gibson (as Maxwell Grant) wrote most of the *Shadow* pulps were regularly witness to an apparition with cloaked face and slouch hat . . . the Shadow himself.

Actress Martha Mansfield, killed on a silent movie set in 1923, but reborn as Daisy in TV's *Dead Like Me*.

Bain News Service/Wikimedia Commons

The popularity of the television series *Dead Like Me* found a most unexpected testimonial in claims that Culver Studios, on Washington Boulevard in Culver City, were haunted by a beautiful young actress who burned to death in an accident on the set of *Gone with the Wind.*

There appeared to be no realization whatsoever that the tragedy was, in fact, nothing more than the fictional backstory for the character of Daisy Adair, although perhaps this is also a case of fiction stepping in where fact comes up short.

In November 1923, actress and Ziegfeld beauty Martha Mansfield died under similar circumstances, when a lighted match ignited her Civil War–era

dress during the filming of the now-forgotten silent film *The Warrens of Virginia.* But the movie was not being made in Culver City, or even California—they were out in San Antonio, Texas, at the time, and while Mansfield's tragic end surely informed the fictional Daisy Adair's, it is difficult to see how the two could then have been conflated as they were.

Unless . . .

The Tale of the Tulpa

. . . Unless we take a leaf out of Indian Buddhist theory and its open acceptance of the existence of the *tulpa*—a supernatural being that has been created through mind power alone; or, as Belgian mystic Alexandra David-Néel put it, a materialized thought that was capable of adopting its very own, unique personality.

In 1929's *Magic and Mystery in Tibet*, David-Néel declared, "Once the tulpa is endowed with enough vitality to be capable of playing the part of a real being, it tends to free itself from its maker's control. This, say Tibetan occultists, happens nearly mechanically, just as the child, when his body is completed and able to live apart, leaves its mother's womb."

Sherlock Holmes, Roderick Usher, Daisy Adair and the Shadow. Tulpa, the lot of them.

Or perhaps we could pursue another theory entirely; the possibility that even the most outlandish fictional characters already exist as independent beings, long before they are "created" by their authors; that they were hitherto simply searching for the correct person to tell their tale. Rather like a modern celebrity auditioning ghostwriters.

Author Erika Cheetham touches upon this possibility with a tale relayed in the opening introduction to her 1985 book, *The Further Prophecies of Nostradamus: 1985 and Beyond.* In 1978, she says, a friend was "staying overnight in a European capital [when] a pleasant female voice in his mind told him the title of a play, in which there were six characters . . . and informed him that he was going to write it.

"His plea of incompetence was swept aside with the assurance that all he had to do was write down what the characters told him. Eight characters, not six, invaded his mind the following evening, saying that they had decided on two plays rather than one. Five weeks later, the plays were completed, to his

relief and the satisfaction of the characters; there had been anxious moments when the characters invaded his mind in the middle of business meetings, causing him to temporarily lose track of what he was saying, but the characters were sufficiently well-mannered to withdraw."

Does this constitute a haunting?

Well, if the friend whom the first character visited had proved unresponsive or reluctant to go along with the scheme, but the visitor had persisted regardless—what else could it be called? A ghost is a ghost, whether it is walking through walls saying "boo" to the butler, or demanding that a novice cowrite a couple of plays with it. And having been brought forth in the words of the finished opus, would we expect those spirits to simply fade back into the ether? Or could they maintain their existence in our world as well?

A story culled from an undated edition of the *Boston Courier* newspaper for inclusion in a 1919 collection of "true American ghost stories" tells another tale of the supernatural undoubtedly impinging upon the arts.

A Model Ghost Story

"A Model Ghost Story" tells how "only a short time ago a young and well-known artist, Mr. A., was invited to pay a visit to his distinguished friend, Mr. Izzard. The house was filled with guests, but a large and handsome room was placed at his disposal, apparently one of the best in the house. For three days he had a delightful visit; delightful in all particulars save one, he had each night a horrible dream."

> He dreamed he was—or was really—suddenly awakened by some person entering his room, and in looking around saw the room brilliantly lighted, while at the window stood a lady elegantly attired, in the act of throwing something out. This accomplished, she turned her face toward the only spectator showing a countenance so distorted by evil passions that he was thrilled with horror. Soon the light and the figure with the dreadful face disappeared, leaving the artist suffering from a frightful nightmare.
>
> On returning to his city home he was so haunted by the fearful countenance which had for three consecutive nights troubled him, that he made a sketch of it, and so real that the evil expression seemed to horrify every one who saw it.

Not a great while after, the artist went to make an evening visit on Mr. Izzard; that gentleman invited him to his picture gallery, as he wished to show him some remarkable, old family portraits. What was Mr. A.'s surprise to recognize among them, in the likeness of a stately, well-dressed lady, the one who had so troubled his slumbers on his previous visit, lacking, however, the revolting, wicked expression.

Soon as he saw it he involuntarily exclaimed, "Why, I have seen that lady!"

"Indeed!" said Mr. I., smiling, "that is hardly possible, as she died more than a hundred years ago. She was the second wife of my great-grandfather, and reflected anything but credit on the family. She was strongly suspected of having murdered her husband's son by a former marriage, in order to make her own child heir to the property. The unfortunate boy broke his neck in a fall from a window, and there was every reason to believe that he was precipitated from the window by his stepmother."

The artist then told his host the circumstances of his thrice-repeated experience, or dream, and sent for his sketch, which, so far as the features were concerned, was identical with the portrait in Mr. Izzard's gallery. The sketch has since been photographed, but from its hideous expression is not very pleasant to look upon.

An artist is inspired to create a sketch by a figure seen in a dream—who turns out to be identical to a person who has already been immortalized in a portrait. Tell that story today, and none would credit any agency other than a long-forgotten sighting of the original painting. At the time, however . . . well, according to the *Boston Courier*, it was "a very singular story, which forms one of the sensational social topics of the day, [and] is the best authenticated of the many supernatural stories that have lately been told."

The White Witch of Rose Hall

Different strokes for different folks, but we would be remiss were we to drift from this topic without one final example of fiction informing a supposedly factual tale of the supernatural, and doing so on one of the largest imaginable stages: the night in February 2010 that the Syfy channel's *Ghost Hunters*

International broadcast its trip to Montego Bay, Jamaica, to investigate what they described as “one of the world’s most haunted places”—Rose Hall, the alleged haunt of the terrifying White Witch of Rose Hall.

They found her, too, and she was everything that the legend insists. Annie was stunningly beautiful and implausibly cruel, the archetypal voodoo queen in every way. According to the legend, she was raised in Haiti where a priestess took such a fancy to her that there was nothing she did not teach the girl, and nothing that the girl could not learn. Outstripping her teacher, Annie was already one of the most powerful enchantresses in Haiti when she decided to move, sometime in the early seventeenth century, to the nearby island of Jamaica.

There she met and quickly married John Palmer, the wealthy owner of the plantation at Rose Hall. Three years later, she buried him, mourning that he had drunk himself to death. She married again, again into money, and this time, her husband went mad. She married a third time, and this one simply vanished. He had married her for her money, Annie mourned. And when he thought he had it, he left her.

Which was not quite how the Rose Hall slaves saw things. According to their frightened whispers, her first husband was seen off with a terrible slow-acting poison, although not before Annie tormented him further by bringing a lover into his bedroom and, with her husband lying, dying, on the bed beside them, made passionate love to her new man.

Her second husband was stabbed, her third was strangled. A fourth was killed with such messy brutality that the bloodstains could never be washed from the floor of the room in which the murder took place.

Neither was it her husbands alone whom Annie so enjoyed dispatching. Any day of the week, she might demand to be entertained by the sight of a few of her slaves being whipped. Apparently she had even set up a comfortable seating area on the balcony, so that she might recline and watch the torture.

Another slave was executed before her eyes, and his severed head placed on a stake to warn other servants not to repeat his misdemeanors.

Needless to say, a woman of such unrepentant sadism and evil could never be laid low by something so mundane as her own death. The stories of Annie’s posthumous misbehavior are so chilling that she even made author Jeff Belanger’s acclaimed gazetteer of international cold spots, *The World’s*

Most Haunted Places, alongside such renowned towers of terror as Ballygally Castle in Ireland; the Deane House in Calgary, Alberta, Ordsall Hall in Salford, England and the Monte Cristo Household in Junee, Australia. So the cast of *Ghost Hunters International* were scarcely stepping into the unknown when they went in pursue of the Witch of White Hall. They were following the lead of one of the modern library's most popular supernatural guidebooks.

There was just one problem. Annie Palmer was not a murderess. She was not a voodoo priestess. She was not a slave driver, nor was she a slave owner. She was not a sadist. In fact, she didn't even exist until 1929, when novelist Herbert G. de Lisser created her as the leading character in his novel *The White Witch of Rose Hall*.

Make no mistake, it is a great book, one of *the* undisputed jewels of the genre, and undeniably deserving of all the attention that its titular character still receives. Indeed, the alacrity with which fresh legends have attached themselves to Annie Palmer's alleged life and crimes are in many ways comparable to the "continuing adventures" to which Sherlock Holmes has been treated in the decades since Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's death.

But the fact remains, she did not exist, at least in this shape or form. Possibly, de Lisser borrowed some of her supposed misbehavior from other local legends—Jamaica was no stranger to either voodoo priestesses or wicked slave owners, after all. And the suggestion that the novel was "based upon a true story" has never been far from its promotional material.

But when the *Ghost Hunters International* team traveled to Jamaica, to the Montego Bay plantation that tradition insists was the real Rose Hall, and declared it absolutely to be haunted by evil Annie . . .

. . .were they merely opening themselves up to a world of ridicule, from within a field of research that itself has spent much of its existence resisting the ridicule of the rest of the world?

Or were they taking a more ironic stance?

The World Will End Tomorrow . . . and You'll Never Guess Who's Responsible!

Nobody who has spent the past twenty years living in the Anglo-American West would deny that an increasing proportion of what passes for modern

culture is almost wholly predicated upon the dictates of the entertainment industry. And is usually phrased as an imbecilic guessing game.

So much of what we are encouraged to accept as "headline news" concerns the lives and loves of celebrities, with even the old faithfuls such as who's dating whom, and whose nose job went the most awry, now relegated to second place behind the revelation of who's had the most naked photos leaked online, and whose "secret sex tape" was the best lit and choreographed.

Likewise, a "breaking news" alert is now as likely to revolve around what happened in the latest episode of *The Walking Dead* . . . *Breaking Bad* . . . *Game of Thrones* . . . *Doctor Who* . . . as it is something that actually took place in the real world.

This is going to sound slightly facetious (and yes, maybe it is intended that way). But ghosts have always moved with the times. Very early on in his masterful *A Natural History of Ghosts*, author Roger Clarke observes, "Ghosts have changed over the years. [Those] in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, for example . . . seemed to hover between the human and the inhuman. The ghosts of Ancient Greece were strange, wraith-like creatures . . . who had no power over the living. Medieval ghosts were reanimated corpses or holy apparitions; Jacobean ghosts, demons pretending to be human."

And so on. Ghosts of the eighteenth century started out by avenging earthly injustices, before adopting a more Gothic demeanor—in common, it might be pointed out, with the latest prevalent theme in popular literature, as the inestimable Mrs. Ann Radcliffe took center stage with the reading public.

The ghosts that howled through the years immediately following the Civil War were populated by mournful women in black—widow's weeds, of course, for which there was no shortage of customers in the wake of the slaughter. Veiled and seemingly vengeful, they offered up a chilling counterpoint to the almost reluctant spirits that otherwise haunted the Victorian-era mind, the domesticated wraiths that contented themselves with rapping and tapping for the joy of the spiritualist movement.

Et cetera.

If today's spirits believe that the best way to get through to the average human is by dressing up as one of the fictional beings whose television lives seem as real to us as our own friends and neighbors, then who could blame them for that? Especially when one learns that American visitors to England

are falling over themselves to book tours of haunted stately homes, in the hope of encountering the ghosts of fallen *Downton Abbey* characters.

Indeed, why should there be any divide whatsoever between the ghost of a person and the ghost of an idea? If trains, planes, buildings and buffalo can all be said to haunt certain locales, and if emotions and fears can still manifest themselves to the living, centuries after the people who experienced them are dead, then why cannot dreams, fantasies and beliefs survive likewise, to be felt again by passers-through?

The Pachyderms of Death

One of the most sobering memorials in all of Chicago's cemeteries is that which stands in silent tribute to the eighty-six people killed when a train carrying the Hagenback-Wallace Circus out of town, in 1918, was rear-ended at high speed by a troop carrier whose engineer had fallen asleep.

A colossal impact followed by a devastating fire ensured a horrific toll, with the majority of the dead laid to rest in Forest Park's Woodlawn Cemetery. And there they lay, peacefully it seems, until some years after the accident, when a further memorial was constructed, in the form of the statues of five elephants.

Immediately, the stories began. The sound of despairing, even dying, elephants could be heard echoing through the cemetery. Despairing, as they tried to pull their human companions from the wreckage of the train before the flames reached the trapped, living bodies. Dying, as they themselves perished in the conflagration.

But there were no elephants aboard the train. No elephants were killed in the disaster, nor were any recruited to the rescue attempts. From beginning to end, the Hagenback-Wallace Circus Disaster was a pachyderm-free zone. And even if it hadn't been, the beast's corpses would scarcely have been buried in a human cemetery.

How, then, could the burial ground be haunted by elephants?

Because people believed it was. And because belief is often an even more powerful stimulant than fact.

Reality is irrelevant, truth is immaterial. A ghost is the end product *not* of death, *not* of the afterlife, *not* of any and all of the myriad other "reasons" that we have passed over in the course of this book.

A ghost is the product of nothing more than an all-powerful emotion, and if you do not believe me, then perhaps you will believe Harry Houdini. Who, it should be pointed out immediately, was dead, felled by peritonitis caused by a ruptured appendix on Halloween night, 1926.

The only question was, would he stay dead? In life, like his friend Arthur Conan Doyle, Houdini had ceaselessly worked to prove, or to disprove, beyond all question of doubt, whether there was an afterlife. In death, he swore to his wife, Bess, he would continue that fight. If there was life after death, he promised her, he would be back to tell her about it.

Houdini's Last Escape

The Houdinis were not stupid. They knew, for they had spent so many years exposing it, that the world of spirit mediumship is rife with fraud, misunderstandings and mistakes. The most genuine seeker in the world can so easily be misled if they misread or misinterpret something that they perceive as evidence.

So Harry and Bess came up with a code that only they were privy to—much as they had done elsewhere in their career together, where seemingly innocuous words or expressions of affection could convey another message entirely. When your life depends upon being able to escape from a sealed box at the bottom of a tank of water, the knowledge of where your wife has secreted the key, without anybody else being aware of the fact, is a very necessary commodity.

And so, every year on the anniversary of her husband's death, Bess Houdini staged a séance. Or, rather, a series of séances, a nationwide communion of mediums and spiritualists, working independently but in concert regardless, all striving to make contact with the great, late escapologist. Once, in 1929, it even appeared that one of them was successful. A medium named Arthur Ford stepped up, bearing with him the full text of the couple's secret code. "Rosabelle [the song that Bess was singing when she and Houdini first met] . . . answer . . . tell . . . pray, answer . . . look . . . tell . . . answer, answer . . . tell."

It was perfect. It was too perfect. Once, Bess recalled, she had let a journalist in on the secret. She had regretted it at the time, and she resented it all the more now. For it was he who passed the words to the fraudulent Ford.

Disappointed but not yet daunted, Bess Houdini would continue holding séances for her husband for another seven years, until 1936 brought the tenth anniversary of his death. And then she said farewell.

“Houdini did not come through. My last hope is gone. I do not believe that Houdini can come back to me, or to anyone. The Houdini shrine has burned for ten years. I now reverently . . . turn out the light. It is finished.

“Good night, Harry.”

Then she revealed to the world the one word, more than any other in the code that she and Houdini had devised, that would truly answer all of the questions. All that business about “look, tell, answer,” that was simply Houdini establishing his identity, proving that he was who he claimed to be.

The real word that Bess was waiting for, and which the rest of mankind has been waiting for, too, was the simplest of them all.

It was “believe.”

Believe in ghosts, and not only will you see them. They will also adhere to whatever form you believe they ought to.

Appendix: Paranormal Television Investigations

Like it or loathe it, across the spectrum of cable broadcasting, paranormal reality TV has spent a good part of the last ten years investigating America's most notoriously haunted locations, in the process establishing a wholly unimpeachable database of the nation's most gloriously ghostly destinations.

The following indexes, by location, the stateside haunts visited and investigated by the following shows (as of 2014): *Deep South Paranormal*, *Destination Fear*, *Destination Truth*, *Extreme Paranormal*, *Ghost Adventures*, *Ghost Adventures: Aftershocks*, *Ghost Hunters*, *Ghost Hunters Academy*, *Ghost Lab*, *Ghost Mine*, *Ghost Stories*, *Haunted Encounters*, *Most Terrifying Places in America*, *Paranormal State*, *Paranormal Witness* and *Scariest Places on Earth*.

Abbeville, SC—private residence (*Paranormal Witness*, season 3, episode 16)

Alameda, CA—USS *Hornet* (*Ghost Adventures*, season 4, episode 8)
Alameda, CA—USS *Hornet* (*Ghost Adventures: Aftershocks*, season 1, episode 3)
Alameda, CA—USS *Hornet* (*Ghost Hunters*, season 4, episode 22)
Alameda, CA—USS *Hornet* (*Ghost Stories*, season 2, episode 4)

Albany, NY—private residence (*Ghost Hunters*, season 1, episode 10)

Alexandria, LA—Finnegans Wake and Diamond Grill (*Ghost Hunters*, season 7, episode 1)

Alexandria, LA—Alexandria Zoological Park (*Ghost Hunters*, season 8, episode 16)
Alexandria, LA—Hotel Bentley (*Ghost Hunters*, season 7, episode 1)

Alexandria, VA—Lee-Fendall House (*Ghost Hunters*, season 5, episode 11)

Alton, IL—Mineral Springs Hotel (*Most Terrifying Places in America*, season 1, episode 6)
Alton, IL—Milton School (*Ghost Hunters*, season 6, episode 17)
Alton, IL—McPike Mansion (*Ghost Lab*, season 1, episode 13)
Alton, IL—McPike Mansion (*Scariest Places on Earth*, season 2, episode 2)

Altoona, PA—private residence (*Ghost Hunters*, season 1, episode 1)
Altoona, PA—Altoona Railroaders Memorial Museum (*Ghost Hunters*, season 1, episode 2)
Altoona, PA—Mishler Theater (*Ghost Hunters*, season 1, episode 2)

Angola, NY—Pigman Road (*Destination Fear*, season 1, episode 12)
Annapolis, MD—US Naval Institute (*Ghost Hunters*, season 8, episode 8)
Antrim, NH—Antrim Family House (*Ghost Hunters*, season 8, episode 1)

Appleton, NY—Marjim Manor (*Most Terrifying Places in America*, season 1, episode 7)
Appleton, NY—The Winery at Marjim Manor (*Ghost Hunters*, season 4, episode 20)

Arlington, TX—private residence (*Paranormal Witness*, season 3, episode 17)
Asbury Park, NJ—Stephen Crane House (*Ghost Hunters*, season 6, episode 4)

Ashland, MA—Stone's Public House (*Ghost Hunters*, season 1, episode 3)
Ashland, MA—Stone's Public House (*Most Terrifying Places in America*, season 1, episode 3)
Ashland, MA—Stone's Public House (*Ghost Lab*, season 2, episode 3)

Ashmore, IL—Ashmore Estates (*Ghost Adventures*, season 5, episode 1)

Atchison, KS—private residence (*Paranormal Witness*, season 3, episode 18)
Athens, TN—bed and breakfast (*Paranormal State*, season 3, episode 12)
Athol, MA—private home (*Ghost Hunters*, season 3, episode 18)

Atlanta, GA—Georgia Aquarium Titanic Exhibit (*Ghost Hunters*, season 5, episode 6)
Atlanta, GA—Rhodes Hall (*Ghost Hunters*, season 6, episode 24)

Atlantic City, NJ—Absecon Lighthouse (*Ghost Hunters*, season 6, episode 4)

Baltimore, MD—private residence (*Paranormal Witness*, season 1, episode 1)
Baltimore, MD—Westminster Hall (*Scariest Places on Earth*, season 2, episode 6)
Baltimore, MD—USCGC Taney (*Ghost Hunters*, season 8, episode 7)

Bandon, OR—private residence (*Paranormal State*, season 2, episode 7)
Bartonville, IL—Peoria Asylum (*Ghost Hunters*, season 9, episode 3)
Baton Rouge, LA—Old State Capitol (*Ghost Hunters*, season 8, episode 18)
Beaufort, NC—Hammock House (*Ghost Lab*, season 1, episode 11)
Bel-Nor, MO—"The Exorcist House" (*Ghost Adventures*, season 8, episode 7)
Belchertown, MA—Clapp Memorial Library (*Ghost Hunters*, season 4, episode 3)
Belfast, ME—private residence (*Paranormal State*, season 1, episode 10)
Bellingham, MA—Scully residence (*Ghost Hunters*, season 6, episode 9)
Berkshires, MA—New Boston Inn (*Ghost Hunters*, season 1, episode 9)
Berlin, NJ—David Michael's Salon (*Paranormal State*, season 5, episode 4)
Bernards Township, NJ—Devil's Tree (*Most Terrifying Places in America*, season 1, episode 3)

Bethany, NY—Rolling Hills Asylum (*Ghost Adventures*, season 4, episode 2)
Bethany, NY—Rolling Hills Asylum (*Ghost Hunters*, season 2, episode 9)

Bethlehem, PA—Hanoverville Roadhouse (*Ghost Hunters*, season 7, episode 25)
Bethlehem, PA—Sun Inn (*Ghost Hunters*, season 7, episode 25)

Big Sur, CA—Point Sur Lighthouse (*Ghost Adventures*, season 7, episode 3)

Birmingham, AL—Sloss Furnaces (*Ghost Adventures*, season 1, episode 5)
Birmingham, AL—Sloss Furnaces (*Scariest Places on Earth*, season 2, episode 8)
Birmingham, AL—Sloss Furnaces (*Ghost Hunters*, season 6, episode 23)

Bisbee, AZ—Copper Queen Hotel (*Ghost Adventures*, season 6, episode 3)
Bisbee, AZ—Copper Queen Hotel (*Ghost Hunters*, season 3, episode 2)
Bisbee, AZ—Oliver House (*Ghost Adventures*, season 6, episode 3)

Blackstone, MA—Ladouceur House (*Ghost Hunters*, season 5, episode 9)

Block Island, RI—private residence (*Ghost Hunters*, season 9, episode 15)
Block Island, RI—Surf Hotel (*Ghost Hunters*, season 9, episode 15)

Bloomdale, OH—private residence (*Paranormal State*, season 3, episode 11)
Blue Diamond, NV—Bonnie Spring Ranch (*Ghost Adventures*, season 4, episode 17)
Boerne, TX—Ye Kendall Inn (*Ghost Lab*, season 1, episode 12)

Boise, ID—Idaho State Penitentiary (*Ghost Adventures*, season 1, episode 8)
Boise, ID—Egyptian Theater (*Ghost Stories*, season 1, episode 2)

Bonito Lake, NM—Bonito Lake (*Extreme Paranormal*, season 1, episode 2)

Boston, MA—Boston Common (*Haunted Encounters*, season 1, episode 2)
Boston, MA—Boston Marathon Bombing Site (*Ghost Adventures*, season 8, episode 6)

Boulder City, NV—Boulder City Hospital (*Ghost Hunters*, season 9, episode 11)
Bowling Green, KY—Western Kentucky University (*Ghost Hunters*, season 8, episode 24)

Boyle Heights, Los Angeles, CA—Linda Vista Hospital (*Ghost Adventures*, season 3, episode 7)
Boyle Heights, Los Angeles, CA—Linda Vista Hospital (*Ghost Adventures*,

season 6, episode 5)
Boyle Heights, Los Angeles, CA—Linda Vista Hospital (*Ghost Stories*, season 2, episode 12)

Bretton Woods, NH—Mount Washington Hotel (*Ghost Hunters*, season 4, episode 7)
Bretton Woods, NH—Mount Washington Hotel (*Ghost Hunters*, season 8, episode 11)

Brevard, NC—private residence (*Paranormal State*, season 3, episode 14)
Bridgeport, CT—Remington Arms Factory (*Ghost Adventures*, season 3, episode 5)
Bridgeton, NJ—private residence (*Paranormal State*, season 3, episode 1)
Broken Bow, NE—Lonergan Farm (*Paranormal Witness*, season 3, episode 3)

Brookdale, CA—Brookdale Lodge (*Ghost Adventures*, season 7, episode 8)
Brookdale, CA—Brookdale Lodge (*Ghost Adventures: Aftershocks*, season 1, episode 1)

Brooklyn, NY—Most Holy Trinity Church (*Destination Fear*, season 1, episode 7)
Brooklyn, NY—private residence (*Paranormal Witness*, season 2, episode 2)

Brownstown, IN—private residence (*Paranormal State*, season 4, episode 7)
Brunswick, MD—private residence (*Paranormal State*, season 3, episode 9)
Buckhannon, WV—private residence (*Paranormal State*, season 3, episode 10)

Buffalo, NY—Buffalo & Erie County Naval & Military Park (*Ghost Hunters*, season 9, episode 18)
Buffalo, NY—Buffalo Central Terminal (*Ghost Hunters*, season 4, episode 17)
Buffalo, NY—Buffalo Central Terminal (*Ghost Hunters Academy*, season 1, episode 4)
Buffalo, NY—Iron Island Museum (*Ghost Lab*, season 2, episode 8)
Buffalo, NY—Iron Island Museum (*Ghost Hunters*, season 4, episode 14)

Cahawba, AL—Bell Plantation (*Deep South Paranormal*, season 1, episode 5)
Cahawba, AL—Cahawba Cemetery (*Deep South Paranormal*, season 1, episode 5)

Camden, ME—private residence (*Paranormal State*, season 1, episode 6)
Canandaigua, NY—Leonard residence (*Ghost Hunters*, season 2, episode 16)
Canonsburg, PA—private residence (*Paranormal State*, season 2, episode 1)

Cape May, NJ—Peter Shields Inn (*Ghost Stories*, season 2, episode 1)
Cape May, NJ—Southern Mansion (*Ghost Hunters*, season 6, episode 5)

Carbondale, IL—Hundley House (*Ghost Lab*, season 2, episode 11)
Carmel, IN—Fox Hollow farm (*Ghost Adventures*, season 9, episode 9)
Carmel, CA—Tor House (*Ghost Adventures*, season 7, episode 9)
Cashtown, PA—The Cashtown Inn (*Ghost Hunters*, season 4, episode 4)

Cedar Grove, NJ—Essex County Hospital (*Ghost Adventures*, season 1, episode 6)
Cedar Grove, NJ—Essex County Hospital (*Ghost Hunters Academy*, season 1, episode 6)
Cedar Grove, NJ—Essex County Hospital (*Ghost Hunters*, season 5, episode 8)

Chadds Ford, PA—Thornbury Farm (*Ghost Hunters*, season 5, episode 11)
Charles City, VA—Edgewood Plantation (*Ghost Hunters*, season 5, episode 10)

Charleston, SC—Magnolia Plantation (*Ghost Hunters*, season 8, episode 18)
Charleston, SC—Old Charleston Jail (*Paranormal State*, season 5, episode 3)
Charleston, SC—Old Charleston Jail (*Ghost Adventures*, season 5, episode 10)
Charleston, SC—Old Charleston Jail (*Ghost Hunters*, season 8, episode 13)

Charlestown, RI—General Stanton Inn (*Ghost Hunters*, season 3, episode 10)
Chatham, MA—old schoolhouse (*Paranormal State*, season 1, episode 12)
Chattanooga, TN—Delta Queen (*Ghost Lab*, season 1, episode 11)

Chesapeake, VA—Keffer Home (*Ghost Hunters*, season 3, episode 10)
Chester, VT—Johnson Residence (*Ghost Hunters*, season 3, episode 3)
Chester County, PA—Pennhurst Asylum (*Ghost Hunters*, season 7, episode 2)

Chicago, IL—Benton House (*Ghost Hunters*, season 5, episode 14)
Chicago, IL—Big Timers Sound Shop (*Paranormal Cops*, season 1, episode 1)
Chicago, IL—Congress Theater (*Ghost Hunters*, season 5, episode 18)
Chicago, IL—Excalibur Nightclub (*Ghost Adventures*, season 7, episode 2)
Chicago, IL—Hull House (*Most Terrifying Places in America*, season 1, episode 6)
Chicago, IL—Liar's Club (*Most Terrifying Places in America*, season 1, episode 4)
Chicago, IL—Liar's Club (*Ghost Lab*, season 1, episode 3)
Chicago, IL—Metro Rock Club (*Ghost Lab*, season 1, episode 5)
Chicago, IL—Old Town Tatu (*Ghost Lab*, season 1, episode 4)
Chicago, IL—Old Town Tatu (*Most Terrifying Places in America*, season 1, episode 2)
Chicago, IL—private residence (*Paranormal Witness*, season 2, episode 12)
Chicago, IL—various private locations (*Paranormal Cops*, season 1, episodes 3-6)

Chico, CA—private residence (*Paranormal Witness*, season 2, episode 6)
Chilton, WI—private residence (*Paranormal Witness*, season 3, episode 15)
Cimarron, NM—St. James Hotel (*Ghost Adventures*, season 9, episode 8)

Cincinnati, OH—Cincinnati Music Hall (*Most Terrifying Places in America*, season 1, episode 7)
Cincinnati, OH—Sedamsville Rectory (*Ghost Adventures*, season 7, episode 6)
Cincinnati, OH—Sedamsville Rectory (*Ghost Adventures: Aftershocks*, season 1, episode 4)

Claremont, NH—Topstone Mill (*Ghost Hunters*, season 8, episode 20)

Clark, NV—Mustang Ranch (*Ghost Adventures*, season 8, episode 9)

Clark, NV—Mustang Ranch (*Ghost Adventures: Aftershocks*, season 1, episode 5)

Cleveland, OH—private residence (*Ghost Lab*, season 2, episode 4)
Clinton, NJ—The Red Mill (*Ghost Hunters*, season 4, episode 12)

Clovis, CA—Clovis Avenue Sanitarium aka Clovis Wolfe Manor (*Ghost Hunters*, season 4, episode 25)
Clovis, CA—Clovis Avenue Sanitarium aka Clovis Wolfe Manor (*Ghost Adventures*, season 3, episode 10)

Cohoes, NY—Cohoes Music Hall (*Most Terrifying Places in America*, season 1, episode 4)
Coles County, IL—Ashmore Estates (*Ghost Hunters*, season 9, episode 4)
Columbus, OH—Thurber House (*Ghost Hunters*, season 6, episode 18)
Concord, MA—The Colonial Inn (*Ghost Hunters*, season 6, episode 14)
Conneaut Lake, PA—Hotel Conneaut (*Paranormal State*, season 4, episode 3)
Connecticut—Ogden Vacation House (*Ghost Hunters*, season 2, episode 10)

Cooperstown, NY—Hyde Hall (*Ghost Hunters*, season 9, episode 16)
Cooperstown, NY—National Baseball Hall of Fame (*Ghost Hunters*, season 6, episode 15)
Cooperstown, NY—Otesaga Hotel (*Ghost Hunters*, season 6, episode 11)

Corpus Christi, TX—USS *Lexington* (*Ghost Lab*, season 1, episode 12)
Corpus Christi, TX—USS *Lexington* (*Most Terrifying Places in America*, season 1, episode 4)
Corpus Christi, TX—USS *Lexington* (*Ghost Hunters*, season 3, episode 11)

Cortland, NY—The 1890 House (*Ghost Hunters*, season 9, episode 4)
Coudersport, PA—private residence (*Paranormal State*, season 1, episode 15)
Coventry, CT—Nathan Hale Homestead (*Ghost Hunters*, season 9, episode 6)
Coventry, RI—Harris Firehouse (*Ghost Hunters*, season 2, episode 5)
Covington, GA—Gaither Plantation (*Ghost Hunters*, season 5, episode 6)

Cranston, RI—private residence (*Ghost Hunters*, season 2, episode 2)
Cranston, RI—Sprague Mansion (*Ghost Hunters*, season 3, episode 16)

Cripple Creek, CO—Colorado Grande Casino (*Ghost Adventures*, season 7, episode 7)
Cripple Creek, CO—Outlaws & Lawmen Jail Museum (*Ghost Adventures*, season 7, episode 7)

Cumberland, RI—Cumberland Library and Monastery (*Ghost Hunters*, season 9, episode 22)

Daisytown, PA—private residence (*Paranormal State*, season 2, episode 9)
Daisytown, PA—private residence (*Paranormal State*, season 5, episode 6)

Dallas, TX—Hotel Lawrence (*Ghost Lab*, season 1, episode 7)
Damascus, VA—private residence (*Paranormal State*, season 3, episode 20)

Dayton, OH—Building #70 at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base (*Ghost Hunters*, season 4, episode 6)
Dayton, OH—Arnold House (*Ghost Hunters*, season 4, episode 6)

Dayville, CT—private home (*Ghost Hunters*, season 4, episode 20)

Deadwood, SD—Fairmont Hotel (*Ghost Lab*, season 2, episode 13)
Deadwood, SD—Wild Bill Bar (*Ghost Lab*, season 2, episode 13)

Death Valley Junction, CA—Amargosa Opera House (*Ghost Adventures*, season 4, episode 11)
Decatur, IL—Lincoln Theater (*Most Terrifying Places in America*, season 1, episode 1)
Deer Lodge, MT—Montana State Prison (*Ghost Lab*, season 2, episode 9)
Deer Park, WA—private residence (*Paranormal State*, season 2, episode 11)

Denver, CO—Cheesman Park (*Most Terrifying Places in America*, season 1, episode 3)
Denver, CO—Cheesman Park (*Scariest Places on Earth*, season 3, episode 7)
Denver, CO—Peabody-Whitehead Mansion (*Ghost Adventures*, season 6,

episode 2)
Denver, CO—University of Colorado (*Ghost Adventures*, season 6, episode 2)

Derby, CT—Sterling Opera House (*Destination Fear*, season 1, episode 8)
Derby, CT—Sterling Opera House (*Ghost Hunters*, season 7, episode 9)

DeRidder, LA—Beauregard Parish Jail (*Destination Fear*, season 1, episode 7)

Derry, LA—Magnolia Plantation (*Destination Fear*, season 1, episode 5)
Derry, LA—Magnolia Plantation (*Scariest Places on Earth*, season 2, episodes 1–5)
Derry, LA—Magnolia Plantation (*Scariest Places on Earth*, season 3, episode 4)

Dillon, MT—Bannack Ghost Town (*Ghost Adventures*, season 9, episode 4)
Duluth, GA—private residence (*Paranormal State*, season 4, episode 10)
Eatonton, GA—Oakland Hall (*Ghost Hunters*, season 5, episode 20)
El Dorado County, CA—Bullion Bend, US Route 50 (*Paranormal Witness*, season 1, episode 2)
El Paso, TX—converted church (*Paranormal Witness*, season 3, episode 4)
Elizabeth, NJ—Union County Courthouse (*Ghost Hunters*, season 5, episode 13)
Elizabethtown, PA—private residence (*Paranormal State*, season 1, episode 2)
Elkin, NC—private residence (*Paranormal State*, season 4, episode 2)
Enid, OK—Garfield Furniture (*Ghost Lab*, season 1, episode 6)
Essex, MA—The Windward Grille (*Ghost Hunters*, season 4, episode 25)

Estes Park, CO—The Stanley Hotel (*Ghost Adventures*, season 4, episode 5)
Estes Park, CO—The Stanley Hotel (*Ghost Hunters Academy*, season 1, episode 12)
Estes Park, CO—The Stanley Hotel (*Most Terrifying Places in America*, season 1, episode 1)
Estes Park, CO—The Stanley Hotel (*Ghost Hunters*, season 3, episode 5)
Estes Park, CO—The Stanley Hotel (*Ghost Hunters*, season 2, episode 22)

Eugene, OR—Campbell House B&B (*Paranormal State*, season 5, episode 5)
Eureka Springs, AR—Crescent Hotel (*Ghost Hunters*, season 2, episode 13)

Evansville, IN—Willard Library (*Most Terrifying Places in America*, season 1, episode 5)
Evansville, IN—Willard Library (*Ghost Hunters*, season 2, episode 17)

Excelsior Springs, MO—Elms Resort and Spa (*Ghost Hunters*, season 9, episode 12)
Fairfax County, VA—Bunnyman Bridge (*Scariest Places on Earth*, season 2, episode 1)
Fairfield, PA—Fairfield Inn (*Ghost Lab*, season 2, episode 1)

Fall River, MA—Lizzie Borden House (*Ghost Adventures*, season 5, episode 5)
Fall River, MA—Lizzie Borden House (*Ghost Adventures: Aftershocks*, season 1, episode 7)
Fall River, MA—Lizzie Borden House (*Ghost Lab*, season 2, episode 3)
Fall River, MA—Lizzie Borden House (*Haunted Encounters*, season 1, episode 1)
Fall River, MA—Lizzie Borden House (*Most Terrifying Places in America*, season 1, episode 3)
Fall River, MA—Lizzie Borden House (*Scariest Places on Earth*, season 3, episode 7)
Fall River, MA—Lizzie Borden House (*Ghost Hunters*, season 2, episode 12)

Farmington, NY—Burson House (*Ghost Hunters*, season 8, episode 6)
Fayetteville, NC—Rivers House (*Ghost Hunters*, season 7, episode 9)
Fitzwilliam, NH—Amos Blake House (*Ghost Hunters*, season 5, episode 21)
Flemington, NJ—private residence (*Paranormal State*, season 3, episode 13)
Florence, AL—Sweetwater Mansion (*Paranormal State*, season 5, episode 19)
Florissant, CO—private residence (*Ghost Adventures*, season 7, episode 7)
Floyds Knobs, IN—Hoffman House (*Ghost Hunters*, season 9, episode 6)
Fort Smith, AR—Fort Chaffee (*Ghost Adventures*, season 4, episode 10)

Fort Worth, TX—Miss Molly's Bed & Breakfast (*Ghost Lab*, season 1, episode 4)
Fort Worth, TX—Miss Molly's Bed & Breakfast (*Most Terrifying Places in America*, season 1, episode 4)

Fowler, IN—private residence (*Paranormal State*, season 3, episode 18)
Frankfort, KY—Buffalo Trace Distillery (*Ghost Hunters*, season 7, episode 23)

Franklin, KY—Octagon Hall (*Most Terrifying Places in America*, season 1, episode 7)
Franklin, KY—Octagon Hall (*Ghost Hunters*, season 9, episode 19)

Franklin, TN—Lotz House (*Most Terrifying Places in America*, season 1, episode 6)
Galena, IL—One Eleven Main Restaurant (*Paranormal Cops*, season 1, pilot)

Galveston, TX—Hotel Galvez (*Ghost Lab*, season 1, episode 9)
Galveston, TX—Hotel Galvez (*Ghost Stories*, season 2, episode 9)

Gardner, MA—private residence (*Ghost Adventures*, season 8, episode 6)
Gardner, MA—private residence (*Paranormal Witness*, season 3, episode 2)
Gardner, MA—Gardner Mansion (*Ghost Hunters*, season 8, episode 2)
Gardner, MA—MacLean Residence (*Ghost Hunters*, season 3, episode 9)
Gardner, MA—Veau Residence (*Ghost Hunters*, season 3, episode 4)

Georges Island, MA—Fort Warren (*Destination Fear*, season 1, episode 5)

Gettysburg, PA—Farnsworth House (*Ghost Lab*, season 2, episode 1)
Gettysburg, PA—bed and breakfast (*Paranormal State*, season 3, episode 17)
Gettysburg, PA—Engine House (*Ghost Adventures*, season 4, episode 1)
Gettysburg, PA—Gettysburg Orphanage (*Ghost Adventures*, season 4, episode 1)
Gettysburg, PA—Jennie Wade House (*Ghost Adventures*, season 4, episode 1)
Gettysburg, PA—Jennie Wade House (*Ghost Hunters*, season 9, episode 17)

Gettysburg, PA—Soldiers National Museum (*Ghost Lab*, season 2, episode 8)

Gilford, NH—Kimball Castle (*Ghost Hunters*, season 5, episode 2)
Glen Mills, PA—Hannum House (*Ghost Hunters*, season 5, episode 1)
Gloucester, MA—Hammond Castle (*Ghost Hunters*, season 8, episode 23)
Golden, CO—Buffalo Bill Museum (*Ghost Hunters*, season 5, episode 20)

Goldfield, NV—Goldfield Hotel (*Ghost Adventures*, season 4, episode 16)
Goldfield, NV—Goldfield Hotel (*Scariest Places on Earth*, season 2, episode 25)
Goldfield, NV—Goldfield Hotel (*Ghost Hunters*, season 4, episode 8)
Goldfield, NV—Goldfield Hotel (*Ghost Adventures*, season 7, episode 16)
Goldfield, NV—Nixon Building (*Ghost Adventures*, season 4, episode 16)
Goldfield, NV—Santa Fe Saloon (*Ghost Adventures*, season 4, episode 16

Goliad, TX—Presidio La Bahia (*Ghost Lab*, season 1, episode 9)
Goliad, TX—Presidio La Bahia (*Most Terrifying Places in America*, season 1, episode 5)

Goodsprings, NV—Pioneer Saloon (*Ghost Adventures*, season 8, episode 1)
Grafton, MA—private residence (*Ghost Hunters*, season 2, episode 2)
Granbury, TX—Granbury Opera House (*Ghost Lab*, season 1, episode 6)
Granby, CT—private residence (*Ghost Adventures*, season 6, episode 6)
Grayhaven Island, MI—private residence (*Paranormal State*, season 4, episode 5)
Greenfield, IN—Black Moon Manor (*Ghost Adventures*, season 7, episode 5)
Greensburg, KS—private residence (*Paranormal State*, season 3, episode 5)
Groton, CT—private home (*Ghost Hunters*, season 4, episode 16)
Gulf Shores, AL—private residence (*Paranormal State*, season 3, episode 19)
Guthrie, OK—Stone Lion Inn (*Ghost Hunters*, season 2, episode 21)

Halestown, TN—Hales Bar Marina and Dam (*Ghost Adventures*, season 4, episode 24)
Halestown, TN—Hales Bar Marina and Dam (*Ghost Hunters*, season 8, episode 3)

Hampton Falls, NH—Governor's Mansion (*Ghost Hunters*, season 8, episode 22)
Harrisburg, PA—Harrisburg State Hospital (*Ghost Lab*, season 2, episode 7)
Harrisville, RI—Sutcliffe House (*Ghost Hunters*, season 2, episode 7)
Harrodsburg, KY—Rocky Point Manor (*Ghost Adventures*, season 5, episode 8)

Hartford, CT—Mark Twain House (*Ghost Hunters Academy*, season 1, episode 9)
Hartford, CT—Mark Twain House (*Ghost Hunters*, season 5, episode 23)
Hartford, CT—Mark Twain House (*Ghost Hunters*, season 8, episode 26)
Hartford, CT—Harriet Beecher Stowe House (*Ghost Hunters*, season 6, episode 3)
Hartford, CT—Hartford Conservatory music school (*Ghost Hunters*, season 2, episode 18)
Hartford, CT—Hartford Elks Lodge #19 (*Ghost Hunters*, season 7, episode 24)
Hartford, CT—Old State House (*Ghost Hunters*, season 5, episode 24)

Haverstraw, NY—Letchworth Village (*Ghost Adventures*, season 5, episode 6)
Haverstraw, NY—Letchworth Village (*Ghost Adventures: Aftershocks*, season 1, episode 2)

Holliston, MA—Mades residence (*Ghost Hunters*, season 2, episode 15)

Holly, MI—Holly Hotel (*Most Terrifying Places in America*, season 1, episode 6)
Holly, MI—private residence (*Paranormal Witness*, season 2, episode 5)

Hollywood, CA—Silent Movie Theater (*Haunted Encounters*, season 1, episode 1)
Hollywood, CA—Manson Murders (*Ghost Hunters*, season 3, episode 12)

Homestead, PA—Homestead Police Station (*Ghost Hunters*, season 7, episode 15)
Homestead, PA—Carnegie Library (*Ghost Hunters*, season 7, episode 15)

Honolulu, HI—Pacific Aviation Museum (*Ghost Hunters*, season 7, episode 10)
Hopkinton, NH—MacNeil House (*Ghost Hunters*, season 5, episode 13)
Hot Springs, AR—The Poet's Loft (*Ghost Lab*, season 2, episode 6)

Houma, LA—Houma Burial Grounds (*Deep South Paranormal*, season 1, episode 6)
Houma, LA—Southdown Plantation (*Deep South Paranormal*, season 1, episode 6)

Hunt, TX—private residence (*Paranormal State*, season 2, episode 3)
Huntington, IN—private residence (*Paranormal State*, season 5, episode 21)
Huntington, NY—Mount Misery (*Most Terrifying Places in America*, season 1, episode 5)
Hurricane Mills, TN—Loretta Lynn Plantation (*Ghost Adventures*, season 4, episode 27)
Indianapolis, IN—private residence (*Paranormal Witness*, season 3, episode 19)

Ione, CA—Preston Castle (*Ghost Adventures*, season 2, episode 1)
Ione, CA—Preston Castle (*Ghost Hunters*, season 6, episode 6)

Jackson, NH—Christmas Farm Inn (*Ghost Hunters*, season 6, episode 25)

Jefferson City, MO—Missouri State Penitentiary (*Ghost Hunters*, season 7, episode 21)
Jefferson City, MO—Missouri State Penitentiary (*Ghost Adventures*, season 8, episode 4)

Jerome, AZ—Grand Hotel (*Ghost Adventures*, season 4, episode 20)
Jerome, AZ—Grand Hotel (*Most Terrifying Places in America*, season 1, episode 5)
Jerome, AZ—private residence (*Ghost Stories*, season 2, episode 5)

Joliet, IL—Rialto Square Theatre (*Ghost Hunters*, season 8, episode 19)
Justice, IL—Archer Avenue (*Most Terrifying Places in America*, season 1, episode 3)

Kansas City, MO—Chambers of Edgar Allan Poe (*Ghost Lab*, season 2, episode 12)
Kansas City, MO—Union Station (*Ghost Adventures*, season 7, episode 10)

Key West, FL—St. Paul's Church (*Most Terrifying Places in America*, season 1, episode 6)
King George, VA—Belle Grove Plantation (*Ghost Hunters*, season 9, episode 21)
Kingston, NY—Old Ulster County Jail (*Ghost Hunters*, season 6, episode 20)
Kingston, RI—University of Rhode Island (*Ghost Hunters*, season 8, episode 7)
Kirksville, MO—private residence (*Paranormal Witness*, season 2, episode 4)
Kittanning, PA—private residence (*Paranormal State*, season 4, episode 11)
Kokomo, IN—private residence (*Paranormal Witness*, season 3, episode 5)
Lake Charles, LA—Calcasieu Court House (*Ghost Stories*, season 2, episode 10)
Lake Forest, IL—Barat College (*Paranormal Cops*, season 1, episode 2)
Lake George, NY—Fort William Henry (*Ghost Hunters*, season 6, episode 22)
Lake Tahoe, AZ—Thunderbird Lodge (*Scariest Places on Earth*, season 3, episode 5)
Lakehurst, NJ—Lakehurst Naval Air Station (*Ghost Hunters*, season 5, episode 25)

Las Vegas, NV—La Palazza Mansion (*Ghost Adventures*, season 4, episode 9)
Las Vegas, NV—Madame Tussaud's Wax Museum (*Ghost Adventures*, season 4, episode 22)
Las Vegas, NV—private residence (*Paranormal State*, season 1, episode 5)
Las Vegas, NV—Riviera Hotel (*Ghost Adventures*, season 6, episode 7)

Lecompte, LA—Old Train Depot (*Deep South Paranormal*, season 1, episode 1)

Lenox, MA—The Mount (*Ghost Hunters*, season 5, episode 3)

Lenox, MA—Ventfort Hall (*Ghost Hunters*, season 7, episode 16)

Leominster, MA—Leblanc House (*Ghost Hunters*, season 4, episode 21)
Lewisburg, WV—private residence (*Paranormal State*, season 4, episode 6)
Liberty, MO—Belvoir Winery (*Ghost Hunters*, season 9, episode 10)
Linesville, PA—Knickerbocker Hotel (*Paranormal State*, season 1, episode 19)
Little Falls, NY—Beardslee Castle (*Ghost Hunters*, season 6, episode 21)
Little Rock, AR—private residence (*Ghost Hunters*, season 9, episode 9)
Live Oak, FL—Route 136 (*Paranormal Witness*, season 1, episode 1)
Lockport, NY—Lockport Caves (*Ghost Hunters*, season 8, episode 21)
Lompoc, CA—La Purisima Mission (*Ghost Adventures*, season 2, episode 3)
London, OH—private residence (*Paranormal Witness*, season 2, episode 10)

Long Beach, CA—*Queen Mary* (*Ghost Adventures*, season 10, episode 1)
Long Beach, CA—*Queen Mary* (*Scariest Places on Earth*, season 1, episode 4)
Long Beach, CA—*Queen Mary* (*Ghost Hunters*, season 2, episode 11)

Long Island, NY—Lake Ronkonkoma (*Most Terrifying Places in America*, season 1, episode 6)
Long Island, NY—private residence (*Paranormal Witness*, season 3, episode 1)

Long Leaf, LA—Long Leaf Sawmill (*Deep South Paranormal*, season 1, episode 1)

Los Angeles, CA—10050 Cielo Drive (*Ghost Adventures*, season 9, episode 1)
Los Angeles, CA—Black Dahlia Murder House (*Haunted Encounters*, season 1, episode 2)
Los Angeles, CA—Hotel Cecil (*Haunted Encounters*, season 1, episode 4)
Los Angeles, CA—Madame Tussaud's (*Ghost Hunters*, season 9, episode 1)
Los Angeles, CA—private residence (*Paranormal Witness*, season 3, episode 7)
Los Angeles, CA—Sowden House (*Ghost Hunters*, season 9, episode 1)
Los Angeles, CA—the Hollywood Sign (*Paranormal Witness*, season 2,

episode 11)
Los Angeles, CA—Jim Henson Studios (*Ghost Hunters*, season 3, episode 12)

Louisville, KY—*Belle of Louisville* (*Ghost Hunters*, season 9, episode 5)
Louisville, KY—Waverly Hills Sanatorium (*Celebrity Paranormal Project*, season 1, episode 1)
Louisville, KY—Waverly Hills Sanatorium (*Ghost Adventures*, season 4, episode 4)
Louisville, KY—Waverly Hills Sanatorium (*Ghost Hunters Academy*, season 1, episode 7)
Louisville, KY—Waverly Hills Sanatorium (*Scariest Places on Earth*, season 2, episode 23)
Louisville, KY—Waverly Hills Sanatorium (*Most Terrifying Places in America*, season 1, episode 1)
Louisville, KY—Waverly Hills Sanatorium (*Ghost Hunters*, season 2, episode 14)
Louisville, KY—Waverly Hills Sanatorium (*Ghost Hunters*, season 7, episode 22)

Lucas, OH—Bromfield Estate (*Ghost Hunters*, season 9, episode 20)
Lucas, OH—Ceely Rose House (*Ghost Hunters*, season 9, episode 20)

Macclenny, FL—private residence (*Deep South Paranormal*, season 1, episode 4)
Macclesfield, NC—Ferrell House (*Ghost Hunters*, season 7, episode 7)
Mackinac Island, MI—Mission Point Resort (*Ghost Hunters*, season 7, episode 6)
Manchester, NH—Palace Theater (*Ghost Hunters*, season 4, episode 10)
Manitou Springs, CO—Briarhurst Manor (*Ghost Hunters*, season 5, episode 19)
Mansfield, CT—Mansfield Mansion (*Paranormal Witness*, season 1, episode 4)

Mansfield, OH—Ohio State Reformatory (*Ghost Hunters Academy*, season 1, episode 11)

Mansfield, OH—Ohio State Reformatory (*Ghost Hunters*, season 2, episode 12)
Mansfield, OH—Ohio State Reformatory (*Ghost Adventures*, season 3, episode 4)
Mansfield, OH—Ohio State Reformatory (*Most Terrifying Places in America*, season 1, episode 1)
Mansfield, OH—Mansfield Reformatory (*Scariest Places on Earth*, season 2, episode 3)
Mansfield, OH—Bissman Building (*Ghost Hunters*, season 6, episode 19)

Manteno, IL—Manteno State Hospital (*Most Terrifying Places in America*, season 1, episode 4)
Marion, NC—private residence (*Ghost Hunters*, season 8, episode 14)
Martha's Vineyard, MA—UFO sighting (*Destination Fear*, season 1, episode 9)
Mason, OH—Kings Island Amusement Park (*Ghost Hunters*, season 8, episode 1)
Massachusetts—private residence (*Ghost Hunters*, season 2, episode 17)
Max Meadows, VA—Major Graham Mansion (*Ghost Hunters*, season 8, episode 5)
Maysville, KY—Kentucky Slave House (*Ghost Adventures*, season 4, episode 25)
Mechanicsville, MD—Summerseat Farm (*Ghost Hunters*, season 7, episode 14)

Memphis, TN—Orpheum Theater (*Most Terrifying Places in America*, season 1, episode 7)
Memphis, TN—Woodruff-Fontaine House (*Ghost Hunters*, season 9, episode 19)

Miamisburg, OH—private residence (*Paranormal State*, season 5, episode 10)
Midlothian, IL—Bachelor's Grove Cemetery (*Most Terrifying Places in America*, season 1, episode 7)
Milwaukee, WI—Riverside Theater (*Destination Fear*, season 1, episode 11)
Mine Hill, NJ—NJ Bar & Grille (*Ghost Hunters*, season 6, episode 7)

Mineral Wells, TX—Baker Hotel (*Ghost Adventures*, season 7, episode 11)
Mitchell, IN—Whispers Estate Bed & Breakfast (*Most Terrifying Places in America*, season 1, episode 5)
Monroe, CT—Stepney Cemetery (*Most Terrifying Places in America*, season 1, episode 5)
Monroeville, PA—private residence (*Paranormal State*, season 5, episode 20)

Monticello, AR—Allen Mansion (*Ghost Hunters*, season 9, episode 13)
Monticello, AR—private residence (*Paranormal Witness*, season 3, episode 13)

Moreno Valley, CA—private residence (*Paranormal Witness*, season 1, episode 3)
Morgan County, GA—Camp Rutledge (*Ghost Hunters*, season 8, episode 14)
Morristown, NJ—private residence (*Paranormal Witness*, season 3, episode 14)

Morse Mill, MO—Morse Mill Hotel (*Most Terrifying Places in America*, season 1, episode 6)
Morse Mill, MO—Morse Mill Hotel (*Ghost Hunters*, season 7, episode 24)

Moss Beach, CA—Moss Beach Distillery (*Ghost Hunters*, season 4, episode 11)

Moundsville, WV—West Virginia State Penitentiary (*Ghost Adventures*, season 1, episode 3)
Moundsville, WV—West Virginia State Penitentiary (*Ghost Stories*, season 1, episode 4)
Moundsville, WV—West Virginia State Penitentiary (*Scariest Places on Earth*, season 3, episode 9)
Moundsville, WV—West Virginia State Penitentiary (*Ghost Lab*, season 2, episode 4)
Moundsville, WV—West Virginia State Penitentiary (*Paranormal State*, season 4, episode 8)
Moundsville, WV—West Virginia State Penitentiary (*Ghost Hunters*, season 3, episode 3)

Mount Holly, NJ—Burlington County Prison (*Ghost Stories*, season 2, episode 11)
Mount Holly, NJ—Burlington County Prison (*Most Terrifying Places in America*, season 1, episode 6)
Mount Holly, NJ—Burlington County Prison (*Ghost Hunters*, season 4, episode 2)

Mount Joy, PA—Bube's Brewery (*Ghost Hunters*, season 8, episode 9)
Mt. Pleasant, SC—USS *Yorktown* (*Ghost Hunters*, season 8, episode 10)

Napanoch, NY—Shanley Hotel (*Ghost Lab*, season 2, episode 6)
Napanoch, NY—Shanley Hotel (*Ghost Hunters*, season 7, episode17)

Naples, NY—Naples Hotel (*Ghost Hunters*, season 8, episode 2)
Nashville, IN—private residence (*Paranormal State*, season 4, episode 4)
Nashville, TN—Tennessee State Prison (*Celebrity Paranormal Project*, season 1, episodes 3, 8)
Natchez, MS—King's Tavern (*Ghost Adventures*, season 7, episode 18)
Natchitoches, LA—Magnolia Plantation (*Ghost Adventures*, season 2, episode 4)
Needmore, PA—private residence (*Paranormal State*, season 5, episode 16)

Nevada City, CA—National Hotel (*Ghost Adventures*, season 6, episode 4)
Nevada City, CA—Stonehouse Brewery (*Ghost Adventures*, season 6, episode 4)

New Bedford, MA—The Armory (*Ghost Hunters*, season 1, episode 7)
New Bedford, MA—Edgerly residence (*Ghost Hunters*, season 2, episode 21)

New Castle, IN—Thornhaven Manor (*Ghost Adventures*, season 8, episode 10)
New Castle, NH—Portsmouth Harbor Light (*Ghost Hunters*, season 4, episode 27)

New Castle, PA—Hill View Manor (*Ghost Adventures*, season 4, episode 6)
New Castle, PA—Hill View Manor (*Ghost Lab*, season 2, episode 2)

New Castle, PA—Hill View Manor (*Ghost Hunters*, season 7, episode 12)

New Hampshire—Worthington residence (*Ghost Hunters*, season 2, episode 9)
New Haven, CT—private home (*Ghost Hunters*, season 4, episode 10)

New Jersey—private home (*Ghost Hunters*, season 2, episode 18)
New Jersey—private residence (*Ghost Hunters*, season 2, episode 8)

New London, CT—Race Rock Lighthouse (*Ghost Hunters*, season 1, episode 4)
New London, CT—The Lighthouse Inn (*Ghost Hunters*, season 1, episode 3)
New London, CT—Ledge Light (*Ghost Hunters*, season 2, episode 6)

New Orleans, LA—Bloody Mary's House (*Ghost Adventures*, season 7, episode 14)
New Orleans, LA—Bloody Mary's House (*Ghost Adventures: Aftershocks*, season 1, episode 3)
New Orleans, LA—Brennan's Restaurant (*Ghost Hunters*, season 2, episode 3)
New Orleans, LA—Cemetery #1 (*Most Terrifying Places in America*, season 1, episode 1)
New Orleans, LA—Cemetery #1 (*Destination Fear*, season 1, episode 13)
New Orleans, LA—City Park (*Destination Fear*, season 1, episode 6)
New Orleans, LA—Mandeville Cemetery (*Ghost Hunters*, season 8, episode 15)
New Orleans, LA—May Baily's Place (*Ghost Adventures*, season 7, episode 14)
New Orleans, LA—Mortuary (*Ghost Lab*, season 1, episode 3)
New Orleans, LA—Mortuary (*Ghost Hunters*, season 8, episode 15)
New Orleans, LA—Sultan's Palace (*Ghost Stories*, season 2, episode 8)
New Orleans, LA—Jimani Lounge (*Ghost Hunters*, season 8, episode 15)
New Orleans, LA—Old US Mint (*Ghost Hunters*, season 7, episode 4)
New Orleans, LA—plantation residence (*Ghost Hunters*, season 2, episode 3)
New Orleans, LA—Manchac Swamp (*Extreme Paranormal*, season 1, episode 1)

New Ringgold, PA—private residence (*Paranormal State*, season 5, episode 14)

New York City, NY—One If By Land, Two If By Sea Restaurant (*Most Terrifying Places in America*, season 1, episode 7)
New York City, NY—New York Friars' Club (*Ghost Hunters*, season 7, episode 18)
New York City, NY—Paddy O'Reilly's Pub (*Ghost Hunters*, season 6, episode 3)
New York City, NY—Manhattan Bistro (*Ghost Stories*, season 2, episode 2)
New York City, NY—St. Mark's Church in the Bowery (*Haunted Encounters*, season 1, episode 5)
New York City, NY—Merchant's House Museum (*Ghost Hunters*, season 2, episode 6)

Newark, OH—Old Licking County Jail (*Ghost Adventures*, season 9, episode 13)
Newburgh, IN—private residence (*Paranormal State*, season 2, episode 8)
Newcastle, CA—private residence (*Paranormal State*, season 5, episode 9)

Newport, RI—Astor Mansion (*Ghost Hunters*, season 2, episode 8)
Newport, RI—Belcourt Castle (*Ghost Hunters*, season 5, episode 5)
Newport, RI—Rose Island (*Ghost Hunters*, season 6, episode 15)
Newport, RI—Seaview Terrace (*Ghost Hunters*, season 7, episode 13)

Newton, NJ—private residence (*Paranormal State*, season 4, episode 1)
Niagara Falls, NY—The Rapids Theatre (*Ghost Hunters*, season 7, episode 19)

North Adams, MA—Houghton Mansion (*Ghost Adventures*, season 1, episode 2)
North Adams, MA—Houghton Mansion (*Haunted Encounters*, season 1, episode 5)

North Attleborough, MA—private home (*Ghost Hunters*, season 4, episode 3)
North Caldwell, NJ—Essex County Penitentiary (*Ghost Hunters*, season 5,

episode 12)
North Hudson, NY—private residence (*Paranormal State*, season 3, episode 4)
North Kingstown, RI—Hoof Fin Feathers Carriage Inn (*Ghost Hunters*, season 4, episode 16)
North Providence, RI—Ruffstone Tavern (*Ghost Hunters*, season 4, episode 7)
Norton, MA—private home (*Ghost Hunters*, season 4, episode 5)

Norwich, CT—Norwich State Hospital (*Celebrity Paranormal Project*, season 1, episodes 2, 4)
Norwich, CT—private home (*Ghost Hunters*, season 4, episode 2)

Ocala, FL—Seven Sisters Inn (*Ghost Hunters*, season 4, episode 18)
Oklahoma City, OK—Zozo Demon House (*Ghost Adventures*, season 10, episode 3)
Old Plaza, Los Angeles, CA—Pico House Hotel (*Ghost Adventures*, season 4, episode 15)
Olustee, FL—Olustee Battlefield Historic State Park (*Deep South Paranormal*, season 1, episode 4)
Onondaga, NY—Split Rock Quarry (*Destination Fear*, season 1, episode 3)
Orleans, MA—Orleans Inn (*Ghost Hunters*, season 6, episode 8)
Orono, ME—Ayers Island Mill (*Celebrity Paranormal Project*, season 1, episodes 5, 6)
Oswego, NY—Fort Ontario (*Ghost Hunters*, season 8, episode 17)
Owingsville, KY—private residence (*Paranormal State*, season 3, episode 7)
Oxford, MA—Voas House (*Ghost Hunters*, season 7, episode 3)
Oxford, NJ—Shippen Manor (*Ghost Hunters*, season 6, episode 13)
Ozark, AL—private residence (*Paranormal State*, season 4, episode 9)
Painesville, OH—Lake County Poor House (*Paranormal State*, season 5, episode 8)
Palmyra, ME—private residence (*Paranormal Witness*, season 3, episode 9)
Parkville, MD—private residence (*Paranormal State*, season 2, episode 4)

Pawtucket, RI—Slater Mill (*Most Terrifying Places in America*, season 1, episode 3)

Pawtucket, RI—Slater Mill (*Ghost Hunters*, season 4, episode 15)

Pea Patch Island, DE—Fort Delaware (*Ghost Hunters Academy*, season 1, episode 10)
Pea Patch Island, DE—Fort Delaware (*Ghost Hunters*, season 4, episode 13)

Pensacola, FL—Arbona Building (*Ghost Hunters*, season 5, episode 21)
Pensacola, FL—Pensacola Light (*Ghost Hunters*, season 5, episode 22)

Perryville, KY—Perryville Battlefield (*Ghost Adventures*, season 8, episode 11)
Perryville, KY—Perryville Battlefield (*Ghost Adventures*, season 5, episode 8)

Perth Amboy, NJ—Proprietary House (*Ghost Hunters*, season 4, episode 12)
Petersburg, VA—private residence (*Paranormal State*, season 2, episode 2)

Philadelphia, PA—Fortuna apartment block (*Ghost Hunters*, season 1, episode 8)
Philadelphia, PA—Topton House pub (*Ghost Hunters*, season 1, episode 8)
Philadelphia, PA—Betsy Ross House (*Ghost Hunters*, season 5, episode 1)
Philadelphia, PA—Eastern State Penitentiary (*Ghost Hunters*, season 2, episode 10)
Philadelphia, PA—Eastern State Penitentiary (*Ghost Hunters*, season 1, episode 5)
Philadelphia, PA—Eastern State Penitentiary (*Ghost Adventures*, season 2, episode 6)
Philadelphia, PA—Eastern State Penitentiary (*Ghost Hunters Academy*, season 1, episode 3)
Philadelphia, PA—Eastern State Penitentiary (*Haunted Encounters*, season 1, episode 3)
Philadelphia, PA—Eastern State Penitentiary (*Scariest Places on Earth*, season 1, episode 2)
Philadelphia, PA—Fort Mifflin (*Ghost Hunters Academy*, season 1, episode 1)
Philadelphia, PA—Fort Mifflin (*Ghost Stories*, season 2, episode 23)
Philadelphia, PA—Fort Mifflin (*Most Terrifying Places in America*, season

1, episode 3)
Philadelphia, PA—Fort Mifflin (*Ghost Hunters*, season 4, episode 1)
Philadelphia, PA—Philadelphia Zoo (*Ghost Hunters*, season 6, episode 12)
Philadelphia, PA—USS *Olympia* (*Ghost Hunters*, season 7, episode 3)

Pine Barrens, NJ—"the Jersey Devil"—private residence (*Paranormal State*, season 4, episode 12)

Pioche, NV—Lincoln County Courthouse and Jail (*Ghost Adventures*, season 9, episode 12)
Pioche, NV—Overland Hotel and Saloon (*Ghost Adventures*, season 9, episode 12)

Pittsburgh, PA—private residence (*Ghost Hunters*, season 1, episode 9)
Plymouth County, MA—Grzelak residence (*Ghost Hunters*, season 6, episode 7)
Pocono Mountains, PA—private residence (*Paranormal State*, season 5, episode 18)
Point Pleasant, WV—"Mothman" (*Paranormal State*, season 1, episode 17)
Ponca City, OK—private residence (*Paranormal Witness*, season 3, episode 11)
Port Townsend, WA—Manresa Castle (*Most Terrifying Places in America*, season 1, episode 3)
Port Washington, NY—Execution Rocks Lighthouse (*Ghost Adventures*, season 3, episode 8)

Portland, OR—Addy's Market (*Paranormal Witness*, season 2, episode 4)
Portland, OR—Shanghai Tunnels (*Ghost Adventures*, season 6, episode 1)
Portland, OR—Shanghai Tunnels (*Most Terrifying Places in America*, season 1, episode 2)
Portland, OR—White Eagle Saloon & Hotel (*Most Terrifying Places in America*, season 1, episode 7)

Portsmouth, NH—Star Island (*Ghost Hunters*, season 5, episode 2)
Prattville, AL—Pratt Cotton Grin Factory (*Deep South Paranormal*, season 1, episode 3)

Preston, CT—Captain Grant's Inn (*Most Terrifying Places in America*, season 1, episode 7)
Preston, CT—Norwich State Hospital (*Ghost Hunters*, season 6, episode 10)

Prince William County, VA—Brentsville Historical Centre (*Ghost Hunters*, season 5, episode 9)

Princeton, WV—Lake Shawnee Fun Park (*Ghost Lab*, season 2, episode 5)
Princeton, WV—Lake Shawnee Fun Park (*Most Terrifying Places in America*, season 1, episode 5)
Princeton, WV—Lake Shawnee Fun Park (*Scariest Places on Earth*, season 3, episode 7)

Prospect, ME—Fort Knox (*Ghost Hunters*, season 7, episode 7)
Prosser, WA—St. Matthew's Church (*Ghost Hunters*, season 3, episode 16)
Providence, RI—Providence City Hall (*Ghost Hunters*, season 8, episode 6)
Putnam, CT—Bradley Playhouse (*Ghost Hunters*, season 2, episode 5)
Quincy, MA—USS *Salem* (*Ghost Hunters*, season 5, episode 16)

Raleigh, NC—private residence (*Paranormal Witness*, season 2, episode 10)
Raleigh, NC—Mordecai House (*Ghost Hunters*, season 2, episode 4)

Rapid City, SD—Hotel Alex Johnson (*Ghost Hunters*, season 7, episode 5)
Rawlins, WY—Wyoming Frontier Prison (*Ghost Adventures*, season 7, episode 12)
Red Boiling Springs, TN—Thomas House (*Ghost Hunters*, season 8, episode 4)
Rehoboth, MA—Route 44 (*Most Terrifying Places in America*, season 1, episode 7)
Reisterstown, MD—private home (*Ghost Hunters*, season 8, episode 9)
Rhode Island—Tedeschi Residence (*Ghost Hunters*, season 3, episode 9)

Rochester, NY—Rochester Public Library (*Ghost Hunters*, season 8, episode 25)
Rochester, NY—Main Street Armory (*Ghost Hunters*, season 7, episode 18)

Rockford, IL—Tinker Cottage (*Ghost Hunters*, season 8, episode 20)

Rolling Fork, MO—Mount Helena (*Deep South Paranormal*, season 1, episode 2)
Romulus, NY—former prison/asylum (*Paranormal State*, season 1, episode 16)
Roselle Park, NJ—Domani's Restaurant (*Ghost Hunters*, season 2, episode 20)
Royal Palm Beach, FL—Riddle House (*Ghost Adventures*, season 1, episode 4)
Sacramento, CA—Sacramento Tunnels (*Ghost Adventures*, season 4, episode 23)

Salem, MA—Hawthorne Hotel (*Ghost Hunters*, season 3, episode 17)
Salem, MA—Lyceum Restaurant (*Ghost Adventures*, season 4, episode 19)
Salem, MA—Lyceum Restaurant (*Ghost Adventures: Aftershocks*, season 1, episode 3)
Salem, MA—Lyceum Restaurant (*Ghost Hunters*, season 3, episode 17)
Salem, MA—Salem Witch House (*Ghost Adventures: Aftershocks*, season 1, episode 3)
Salem, MA—Salem Witch House (*Ghost Adventures*, season 4, episode 19)
Salem, MA—USS *Salem* (*Destination Fear*, season 1, episode 6)

Salt Lake City, UT—"The Fear Factory" (*Ghost Adventures*, season 9, episode 5)
Salt Lake City, UT—Capitol Theatre (*Paranormal Witness*, season 2, episode 3)

Sammamish, WA—Gibbons House (*Ghost Hunters*, season 3, episode 15)

San Antonio, TX—Black Swan Inn (*Ghost Adventures*, season 8, episode 2)
San Antonio, TX—Black Swan Inn (*Ghost Adventures: Aftershocks*, season 1, episode 7)
San Antonio, TX—GDC Building (*Ghost Lab*, season 1, episode 8)

San Bruno, CA—Lullaby Lane Baby Store (*Ghost Hunters*, season 3, episode 14)

San Diego, CA—Casa de Estudillo (*Ghost Adventures*, season 5, episode 3)

San Diego, CA—Cosmopolitan Hotel (*Ghost Adventures*, season 5, episode 3)
San Diego, CA—Whaley House (*Most Terrifying Places in America*, season 1, episode 2)
San Diego, CA—Whaley House (*Ghost Adventures*, season 9, episode 11)
San Diego, CA—Maritime Museum of San Diego (*Ghost Hunters*, season 4, episode 26)

San Francisco, CA—Alcatraz (*Ghost Adventures*, season 8, episode 8)
San Francisco, CA—Alcatraz (*Ghost Hunters*, season 6, episode 1)
San Francisco, CA—Alcatraz (*Ghost Lab*, season 1, episode 10)
San Francisco, CA—Alcatraz (*Scariest Places on Earth*, season 1, episode 4)
San Francisco, CA—Market Street Cinema (*Ghost Adventures*, season 7, episode 15)
San Francisco, CA—The Presidio (*Ghost Hunters*, season 3, episode 14)

San Jose, CA—Winchester Mystery House (*Ghost Adventures*, season 5, episode 4)
San Jose, CA—Winchester Mystery House (*Ghost Adventures: Aftershocks*, season 1, episode 4)
San Jose, CA—Winchester Mystery House (*Most Terrifying Places in America*, season 1, episode 2)
San Jose, CA—Winchester Mystery House (*Ghost Hunters*, season 2, episode 11)

San Juan Capistrano, CA—Mission San Juan Capistrano (*Ghost Hunters*, season 9, episode 2)

San Pedro, CA—private residence (*Paranormal Witness*, season 2, episode 1)
San Pedro, CA—Fort MacArthur Military Museum (*Ghost Adventures*, season 9, episode 7)

Sandy Valley, NV—Belle Mine (*Ghost Adventures*, season 8, episode 1)

Santa Ana, CA—Ritz Hotel (*Ghost Adventures*, season 8, episode 5)
Santa Ana, CA—Yost Theater (*Ghost Adventures*, season 8, episode 5)

Santa Clarita, CA—Heritage Junction (*Ghost Adventures*, season 9, episode 6)
Santa Fe, NM—New Mexico State Penitentiary (*Extreme Paranormal*, season 1, episode 2)
Santa Paula, CA—Glen Tavern Inn (*Ghost Adventures*, season 7, episode 17)
Saranac Lake, NY—private residence (*Paranormal Witness*, season 3, episode 12)
Saratoga Springs, NY—Canfield Casino (*Ghost Hunters*, season 6, episode 18)

Sauk Center, MN—Palmer House (*Ghost Adventures*, season 7, episode 4)
Sauk Center, MN—Palmer House (*Ghost Adventures: Aftershocks*, season 1, episode 5)

Savannah, GA—Gribble House (*Ghost Adventures*, season 9, episode 10)
Savannah, GA—Moon River Brewing Co. (*Ghost Adventures*, season 2, episode 7)
Savannah, GA—Moon River Brewing Co. (*Ghost Stories*, season 2, episode 7)
Savannah, GA—Sorrel Weed House (*Ghost Adventures*, season 9, episode 10)
Savannah, GA—Sorrel Weed House (*Most Terrifying Places in America*, season 1, episode 5)
Savannah, GA—Olson House (*Ghost Hunters*, season 6, episode 21)

Schoharie, NY—Old Stone Fort (*Ghost Hunters*, season 6, episode 25)
Schoolcraft County, MI—Seul Choix Light (*Scariest Places on Earth*, season 2, episode 23)
Scott Township, PA—Pennsylvania Asylum and Testing Lab (*Ghost Hunters*, season 9, episode 15)

Seattle, WA—Georgetown Castle (*Most Terrifying Places in America*, season 1, episode 4)
Seattle, WA—Kell's Irish Pub Restaurant (*Ghost Adventures*, season 4, episode 14)
Seattle, WA—Moore Theater (*Ghost Hunters*, season 3, episode 15)

Seattle, WA—Seattle Underground Tunnels (*Ghost Hunters*, season 3, episode 13)

Sedro-Woolley, WA—Northern State Hospital (*Ghost Hunters*, season 3, episode 13)
Selma, AL—St. James Hotel (*Deep South Paranormal*, season 1, episode 5)
Sewickley, PA—Dixmont State Hospital (*Scariest Places on Earth*, season 3, episode 9)

Shreveport, LA—Caddo Parish Courthouse (*Ghost Hunters*, season 9, episode 14)
Shreveport, LA—Municipal Auditorium (*Ghost Lab*, season 1, episode 1)
Shreveport, LA—Rendall Building (*Ghost Hunters*, season 9, episode 14)
Shreveport, LA—Shreveport Municipal Auditorium (*Ghost Hunters*, season 9, episode 8)

Shrewsbury, MA—private residence (*Paranormal State*, season 2, episode 6)
Simsbury, CT—Pettibone Tavern (*Ghost Hunters*, season 4, episode 15)
Skaneateles, NY—Fuller House (*Ghost Hunters*, season 8, episode 21)
Slanesville, WV—private residence (*Paranormal Witness*, season 3, episode 8)
Sleepy Hollow, NY—"The Headless Horseman" (*Destination Fear*, season 1, episode 1)
Smithtown, NY—Katie's Bar (*Ghost Adventures*, season 9, episode 3)
Snowflake, AZ—Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest (*Paranormal Witness*, season 2, episode 9)
Somerville, MA—Sacco's Bowl-Haven (*Ghost Hunters*, season 5, episode 5)
Sonora, CA—Tuolumne General Hospital (*Ghost Adventures*, season 8, episode 3)
South Pittsburg, TN—Old South Pittsburg Hospital (*Ghost Lab*, season 2, episode 9)
Southington, CT—private residence (*Paranormal Witness*, season 2, episode 7)

Spring City, PA—Pennhurst State School (*Ghost Adventures*, season 3, episode 2)

Spring City, PA—Pennhurst State School (*Extreme Paranormal*, season 1, episode 1)

Springfield, MA—Tanguay House (*Ghost Hunters*, season 2, episode 7)
Springfield, MA—Theodore's & Smith's (*Ghost Hunters*, season 4, episode 21)

Springfield, MO—Pythian Castle (*Ghost Lab*, season 2, episode 11)

St. Augustine, FL—Castillo De San Marcos (*Ghost Adventures*, season 2, episode 2)
St. Augustine, FL—St. Augustine Light (*Ghost Hunters*, season 2, episode 19)
St. Augustine, FL—St. Augustine Light (*Ghost Hunters Academy*, season 1, episode 5)
St. Augustine, FL—St. Augustine Light (*Most Terrifying Places in America*, season 1, episode 5)
St. Augustine, FL—Old St. Johns County Jail (*Ghost Hunters*, season 2, episode 20)

St. Francisville, LA—Myrtles Plantation (*Ghost Hunters*, season 2, episode 1)
St. Francisville, LA—Myrtles Plantation (*Most Terrifying Places in America*, season 1, episode 1)
St. Francisville, LA—Myrtles Plantation (*Ghost Lab*, season 1, episode 1)
St. Francisville, LA—Myrtles Plantation (*Ghost Adventures*, season 9, episode 2)

St. Helens, OR—Klondike Restaurant (*Paranormal State*, season 5, episode 7)

St. Louis, MO—Lemp Mansion (*Ghost Adventures*, season 10, episode 2)
St. Louis, MO—Lemp Mansion (*Ghost Lab*, season 1, episode 13)
St. Louis, MO—Lemp Mansion (*Most Terrifying Places in America*, season 1, episode 2)
St. Louis, MO—Lemp Mansion (*Ghost Hunters*, season 6, episode 16)

St. Petersburg, FL—Renaissance Vinoy Resort (*Ghost Hunters*, season 4, episode 18)

Staten Island, NY—Kreischer mansion (*Haunted Encounters*, season 1, episode 4)
Staten Island, NY—Sailors Snug Harbor (*Ghost Adventures*, season 7, episode 13)
Staten Island, NY—Church of St. Andrews (*Ghost Hunters*, season 5, episode 14)
Staten Island, NY—Sailors' Snug Harbor (*Ghost Hunters*, season 7, episode 20)

Stone Mountain, GA—Antebellum Plantation (*Ghost Hunters*, season 6, episode 20)
Sudbury, MA—Longfellow's Wayside Inn (*Ghost Adventures*, season 4, episode 18)
Sugar Land, TX—Central Unit Prison (*Ghost Adventures*, season 7, episode 1)
Sumpter, OR—Old Crescent Mine (*Ghost Mine* series)

Sumter, SC—private residence (*Paranormal State*, season 5, episode 1)
Sumter, SC—private residence (*Paranormal State*, season 5, episode 12)

Susurro Canyon Commune, CA—(*Celebrity Paranormal Project*, season 1, episode 7)
Sylvan Beach, NY—Sylvan Beach Amusement Park (*Ghost Hunters*, season 9, episode 7)
Syracuse, NY—private residence (*Paranormal State*, season 1, episode 3)
Thousand Islands, NY—Isle of Pines (*Ghost Hunters*, season 5, episode 15)
Ticonderoga, NY—Fort Ticonderoga (*Ghost Hunters*, season 6, episode 2)
Tilton, NH—1875 Inn (*Ghost Hunters*, season 6, episode 13)
Tobyhanna, PA—private residence (*Paranormal State*, season 1, episode 8)

Tombstone, AZ—Bird Cage Theatre (*Ghost Adventures*, season 2, episode 5)
Tombstone, AZ—Bird Cage Theatre (*Ghost Hunters*, season 3, episode 1)
Tombstone, AZ—Tombstone (*Ghost Lab*, season 1, episode 2)
Tombstone, AZ—O.K. Corral (*Ghost Hunters*, season 3, episode 2)

Tompkinsville, KY—private residence (*Ghost Hunters*, season 8, episode 22)

Tonopah, NV—Castle House (*Ghost Adventures*, season 5, episode 2)
Tonopah, NV—Mizpah Hotel (*Ghost Adventures*, season 5, episode 2)

Tooele, UT—Tooele Hospital (*Ghost Adventures*, season 4, episode 26)
Townsend, MA—Reed Homestead and Spaulding Cooperage (*Ghost Hunters*, season 7, episode 14)

Trinway, OH—Prospect Place (*Ghost Adventures*, season 3, episode 9)
Trinway, OH—Prospect Place (*Ghost Hunters*, season 4, episode 5)

Upstate New York—private converted church (*Ghost Hunters*, season 1, episode 6)

Vacherie, LA—Oak Alley Plantation (*Most Terrifying Places in America*, season 1, episode 4)
Vacherie, LA—Oak Alley Plantation (*Ghost Hunters*, season 4, episode 19)

Victor, NY—Valentown Museum (*Ghost Hunters*, season 2, episode 16)

Villisca, IA—Villisca Axe Murder House (*Ghost Adventures*, season 4, episode 13)
Villisca, IA—Villisca Axe Murder House (*Ghost Adventures: Aftershocks*, season 1, episode 2)
Villisca, IA—Villisca Axe Murder House (*Ghost Lab*, season 2, episode 10)
Villisca, IA—Villisca Axe Murder House (*Most Terrifying Places in America*, season 1, episode 1)
Villisca, IA—Villisca Axe Murder House (*Scariest Places on Earth*, season 1, episode 1)
Villisca, IA—Villisca Axe Murder House (*Ghost Stories*, season 1, episode 3)

Virginia City, NV—Chollar Mine (*Ghost Adventures*, season 3, episode 6)
Virginia City, NV—Old Washoe Club (*Ghost Adventures*, season 3, episode 6)
Virginia City, NV—Old Washoe Club (*Ghost Hunters*, season 4, episode 8)

Virginia City, NV—Silver Queen Hotel (*Ghost Adventures*, season 5, episode 7)
Virginia City, NV—St. Mary's Art Center (*Ghost Adventures*, season 5, episode 7)
Virginia City, NV—Yellow Jacket Mine (*Ghost Adventures*, season 5, episode 7)

Volo, IL—Volo Antique Mall (*Ghost Lab*, season 1, episode 8)
Waipahu, HI—Hawaii's Plantation Village (*Ghost Hunters*, season 7, episode 16)
Waldorf, MD—Samuel Mudd House (*Ghost Hunters*, season 5, episode 10)
Waltham, MA—Metropolitan State Hospital (*Scariest Places on Earth*, season 1, episode 3)
Warwick, RI—Warwick City Hall (*Ghost Hunters*, season 3, episode 11)
Washington, MA—Bucksteep Manor (*Ghost Hunters*, season 3, episode 4)
Washington Heights, NY—Morris Jumel Mansion (*Ghost Adventures*, season 9, episode 3)
Watseka, IL—Roff Family Homestead (*Most Terrifying Places in America*, season 1, episode 4)
Waxahachie, TX—Catfish Plantation (*Ghost Lab*, season 1, episode 7)
West Milford, NJ—Clinton Road (*Most Terrifying Places in America*, season 1, episode 2)
Westfield, IN—private residence (*Paranormal Witness*, season 2, episode 8)

Weston, WV—Trans-Allegheny Lunatic Asylum (*Ghost Adventures*, season 3, episode 1)
Weston, WV—Trans-Allegheny Lunatic Asylum (*Ghost Hunters Academy*, season 1, episode 8)
Weston, WV—Trans-Allegheny Lunatic Asylum (*Ghost Stories*, season 1, episode 1)
Weston, WV—Trans-Allegheny Lunatic Asylum (*Ghost Hunters*, season 4, episode 9)

Weymouth, MA—private residence (*Paranormal State*, season 5, episode 2)
Wharton State Forest, NJ—"Jersey Devil" (*Destination Truth*, season 3, episode 12)

White Castle, LA—Nottoway Plantation (*Ghost Lab*, season 1, episode 5)

Whitefield, NH—The Spalding Inn (*Ghost Hunters*, season 5, episode 7)
Whitefield, NH—The Spalding Inn (*Ghost Hunters*, season 8, episode 12)

Whitefish Point, MI—Great Lakes Shipwreck Coast Museum (*Ghost Lab*, season 2, episode 12)

Wickenburg, AZ—Vulture Mine (*Ghost Adventures*, season 4, episode 7)
Wickenburg, AZ—Vulture Mine (*Ghost Adventures: Aftershocks*, season 1, episode 6)

Wickliffe, KY—private residence (*Paranormal State*, season 3, episode 15)

Wilder, KY—Bobby Mackey's Music World (*Ghost Adventures*, season 1, episode 1)
Wilder, KY—Bobby Mackey's Music World (*Ghost Adventures*, season 4, episode 3)
Wilder, KY—Bobby Mackey's Music World (*Ghost Adventures: Aftershocks*, season 1, episode 1)
Wilder, KY—Bobby Mackey's Music World (*Most Terrifying Places in America*, season 1, episode 2)
Wilder, KY—Bobby Mackey's Music World (*Ghost Hunters*, season 7, episode 23)

Willard, NY—Willard Asylum (*Destination Fear*, season 1, episode 12)
Williston, ND—Million Dollar Lane (*Ghost Lab*, season 2, episode 10)
Willow Grove, PA—American Legion Post (*Ghost Hunters*, season 5, episode 24)

Wilmington, NC—USS *North Carolina* (*Ghost Hunters Academy*, season 1, episode 2)
Wilmington, NC—USS *North Carolina* Museum (*Ghost Hunters*, season 2, episode 4)

Winchester, VA—Historic Jordan Springs (*Ghost Hunters*, season 9, episode 21)

Woonsocket, RI—Reid House (*Ghost Hunters*, season 7, episode 11)

Worcester, MA—Higgins Armory Museum (*Ghost Hunters*, season 7, episode 8)
Worcester, MA—Palladium Theatre (*Ghost Hunters*, season 2, episode 15)

Yarmouth Port, MA—Colonial House Inn (*Ghost Hunters*, season 4, episode 11)

Ybor City, FL—The Cuban Club (*Ghost Hunters*, season 5, episode 4)
Ybor City, FL—The Cuban Club (*Ghost Stories*, season 2, episode 6)
Ybor City, FL—Trelles Clinic (*Ghost Hunters*, season 5, episode 4)

York, PA—private residence (*Paranormal State*, season 2, episode 5)
Yorktown, TX—Yorktown Hospital (*Ghost Adventures*, season 4, episode 21)

Youngstown, NY—Fort Niagara (*Ghost Lab*, season 2, episode 2)
Youngstown, NY—Old Fort Niagara (*Ghost Hunters*, season 7, episode 17)

Yuba City, CA—private residence (*Paranormal Witness*, season 2, episode 11)

Yuma, MS—Henry Vick House (*Deep South Paranormal*, season 1, episode 2)
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